Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity

Fosterage and Access to Schooling in Savelugu-Nanton, Ghana

Caine Rolleston

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List of Acronyms

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
ComSS	Community and Schools Survey
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CWIQ	Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire
DA	District Administration
DEO	District Education Office
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GAR	Gross Admission Rate
GER	Gross Enrolment Rates
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HHH	Household Head
JHS	Junior High School
MoESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (Ghana)
NAR	Net Admission Rate
NER	Net Enrolment Rates
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SNDA	Savelugu-Nanton District Assembly
SSS	Senior Secondary School
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination

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Preface

This monograph offers a very important extension to CREATE's work in Ghana. In CREATE Monograph No. 22 Caine Rolleston presented an analysis of the possible causes of exclusion from schooling based on nationwide data. He argued there that while the absolute numbers of children in schooling had increased dramatically in the period since 1991, completion and dropout rates had not improved. And while regional differentials were narrowing they remained substantial with continuing low levels of educational access and progression in Northern Ghana. In this monograph Rolleston explores the impact of the specific cultural practice of child fostering on access and progression among the Dagomba ethnic group in one Northern district, Savelugu-Nanton. The study adds to our understanding of the aspirations and costs of education of 'sending' and 'receiving' families, on the one hand and the gender of the child on the other. Methodologically the study is also of considerable value. Through his careful combination of analysis of enrolment data at the micro-level, careful reading of the work of other scholars, and insights gained through interviews with household caregivers and educational professionals Rolleston deepens our understanding of the micro-level cultural processes that lie behind some aspects of national and regional enrolment trends. In exemplary fashion he demonstrates the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative approaches to education research.

Professor Angela W Little
Institute of Education, London
CREATE Partner Institute Convenor

Summary

In recent years, there have been dramatic improvements in access to basic education in Savelugu-Nanton, particularly at primary level. Nonetheless, enrolment remains comparatively low, partly for well understood reasons of educational supply, affordability of schooling and household livelihoods. Cultural factors are also important and notable among these are the Dagomba practices of child fostering. Fosterage is an important cultural institution which serves to strengthen kinship solidarity among a range of other functions including meeting needs for child labour. Its effects on education are ambiguous. This study examines fostering as a possible contributor to the low levels of educational access and progress in the district using secondary data and interviews with key informants and foster-carers. It finds that the reasons given for fosterage are similar to those cited by scholars in the 1970s, excepting its apparently reduced role in the indigenous education system. A high cultural value is placed on the role of fosterage in promoting kinship solidarity and kinship obligations and rites are considered the primary motives for fostering. At the same time, attitudes towards schooling are largely positive and indirect costs are found to be the principal barrier to enrolment. The effects of fosterage on schooling depend somewhat on the circumstances of the sending and receiving homes, the reason for fostering children between them and the extent to which the two homes cooperate to provide for access to education.

Nonetheless, fostered children do typically experience lower levels of access to meaningful education. This is partly because they tend to live in areas and attend schools where meaningful access is lower, but the individual 'Cinderella effect' of fosterage is found to be palpable, especially for girls, so that being fostered, even to a more economically advantaged households does not typically benefit the foster child educationally and on balance is associated with a worsening of their educational access. Fostered children on average enrol in school less often, drop out more often and achieve less in school, especially when compared to biological children in the same home rather than to children in homes which host no foster children.

The increased availability and importance of public schooling has, arguably, emphasised some of the negative effects of fosterage, perhaps most significantly because of a potential conflict between the 'reciprocal' nature of the fosterage relationship and the requirements of schooling, especially the costs.

Fosterage and Access to Schooling in Savelugu-Nanton, Ghana

1. Introduction

Levels of educational access and progression are considerably lower in northern than in southern Ghana, partly for well understood historical and economic reasons. Cultural factors also exert an important influence. Ethnic and religious differences between northern and southern regions of Ghana are frequently cited, for example, as contributors to the substantially wider gender-gap in terms of educational access indicators in the north. Nonetheless, is not straightforward at the national level to identify or analyse in detail the mechanisms by which cultural beliefs and practices influence educational access. This monograph centres on a single district in northern Ghana; Savelugu-Nanton, which is inhabited primarily by the Dagomba ethnic group. It examines the practices of child fostering, which are prevalent among the Dagomba, as possible contributors to the particularly low levels of educational access and progress in the district. The issue of fosterage was identified as a potentially negative influence on educational access and achievement during interviews centred on more general questions of educational access and economic welfare conducted with education professionals in Savelugu-Nanton and the study draws on these findings along with national and district data and interviews with household caregivers. As Pilon notes in his review of the educational impact of fostering in West Africa, "the extent and respective weight of the causes behind the foster children phenomenon are still very poorly documented" (Pilon, 2003:5) and moreover, although "existing scientific literature reveals that fostering is common in Africa, especially West Africa ... little research has focused on the relationship between fostering and schooling" (Pilon, 2003:4). Accordingly, the study sets out to address these issues in the case of one deprived district of Ghana.

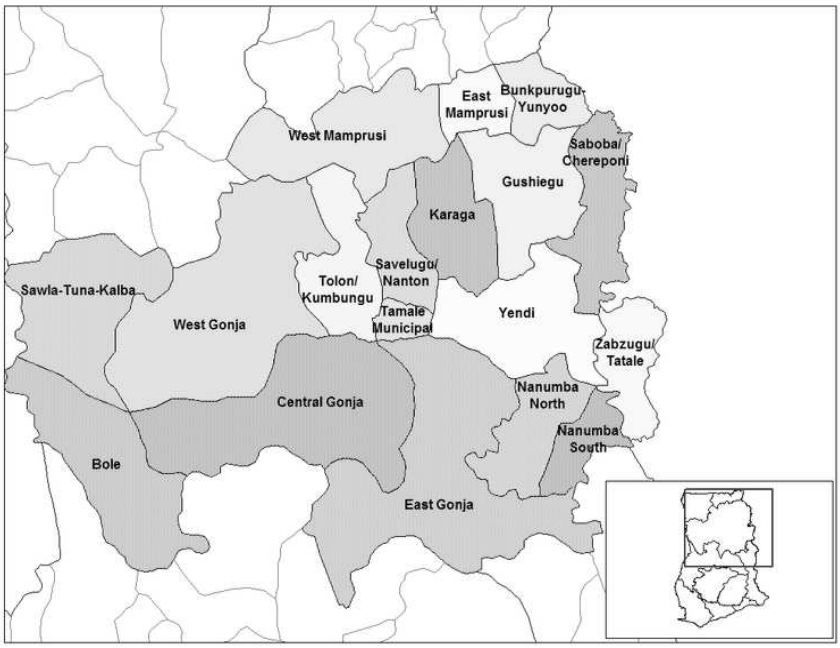
1.1 Background: Savelugu-Nanton District

Savelugu-Nanton is an administrative district within the Northern Region of Ghana located close to the regional capital, Tamale. The district comprises 1,790.7 square kilometres of relatively flat land at fairly low altitude. The population was 91,415 according to the 2000 census and population growth was found to be above the Ghana average (3% compared to 2.6% in 2005). The district is part of the savannah ecological zone and is inhabited mainly by the Dagomba ethnic group. The average household size was 8.7 in 2005. Of 149 communities, 143 are described as rural in which approximately 80% of the population lives. Savelugu-Nanton is one of 7 administrative districts that comprise the homeland of the Dagmoba ethnic group, known collectively as Dagbon. It is described as 'the cradle of the Dagbon' and the district has a higher proportion of Dagomba residents than any other. Dagbani is the most widely spoken language although schooling is mainly in English or English and Arabic. Islam is the dominant religion.

Water shortages are a perennial issue in the district and the prevalence of Guinea-worm is high owing to drinking water contamination. Less than 50% of the population has access to clean water and water shortages have created a market for sale of untreated water, often by school-age children. Of 149 communities, only 17 are connected to the national grid for electricity. Health facilities are limited, with four doctors working in the district in 2005 (one to 25,572 residents), one ambulance and one hospital with 23 beds. In 2005, 40% of children

had stunted growth, 32% were wasted and 34% were underweight (SNDA, 2011). The district had the highest rate of under-5 mortality in Ghana at a staggering 239 deaths per 1,000 live births (GSS, 2005a:20). This compares to 113.7 in Ghana as a whole and 162.1 in the Northern Region (GSS, 2005b:188). This fact may be considered related to certain demographic and cultural features of the district, since the GSS (Ghana Statistical Service), finds that in Ghana, in common with other African countries, child mortality increases with birth order and with shorter birth intervals as well as in cases of polygamous unions (146 compared to 99), which are common in the district (GSS, 2005b:191).

Figure 1: Location of Savelugu-Nanton District of Ghana



Agriculture engages 97% of the labour force in the district, mainly in the form of rain-fed subsistence crop farming, including the cultivation of maize, rice and yam. Incomes are low, especially among women. Other activities include agriculture and wood or metal-based small-scale industry, basic services and petty-trading, often practiced in addition to farming. While the main economic activity of the Dagomba in the past and today is rain-fed subsistence agriculture, traditionally:

> there is considerable trade specialisation. Members of the different professional groups are largely recruited on a hereditary basis and acquisition of their skills requires long periods of training. The professionals include hierarchically organized groups of barbers, butchers, blacksmiths and warriors ... drummers ... historians and fiddlers ... and ... mallams who run many small schools, which attract nearly a third of the male school-going population. (Oppong, 1966:19)

Oppong summarises the traditional living arrangement in Dagbon, making reference to practices of fosterage. Fosterage is widely practiced in Savelugu-Nanton, and is deeply embedded in cultural practice.

> The basic unit of social organization is the household living in a single walled compound or house. Its nucleus is an elementary or polygamous family to which may be attached the descendants of the head's grandfather, that is the head's classificatory

> or full brothers and sisters and their children and grandchildren, and since marriage is virilocal, also the head's wives and his sons' and brothers' wives. The strong ties daughters and sisters retain with their natal homes and the practices of fostering are such that in a sample of households there were found to be as many people related to the household head through his daughters and sisters as through his brothers and sons ... As regards organization of domestic affairs, the resident sister, or occasionally mother of the householder or his first wife, is the senior of the women ... In polygamous households domestic and marital functions are performed by each wife in turn. (Oppong, 1966:10)

An unusual feature of the district which also results in dynamic household composition is the Dagomba custom of *dɔɣ'kuna*, in which a woman returns to her parents' home for an extended period, typically 2 or 3 years shortly after giving birth to a child, especially after the birth of the first few children (UNICEF/IFPRI, 2005:49).

The district suffers deprivation with regard to health, socio-economic and, as will be examined, educational indicators, providing an appropriate context in which to explore the linkages between fosterage and basic educational access and exclusion. The CREATE conceptual model (Lewin, 2007) identifies a number of 'exclusion zones' describing no access to pre-schooling (zone 0), never enrolment in basic schooling (zone 1), drop-out at primary level (zone 2), drop-out upon primary completion (zone 4), drop-out at junior high school (JHS) level and 'silent exclusion' at primary (zone 3) and JHS (zone 6) levels, in the form of inadequate learning achievement and progress. While the data do not permit detailed examination of all of these zones, findings are able to shed light on the contribution of fosterage to these forms of exclusion and this is considered in the discussion.

1.2 Outline of the Study and Research Questions

The study begins with a review of the literature on fosterage among the Dagomba, on education in Dagbon and in Savelugu-Nanton and on the relationships between fosterage and educational access. A number of important issues identified in the literature are pursued using a mixed methods research design which employs both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques making use of data from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (Round 5), CREATE's Community and Schools Survey (ComSS) and interviews with education professionals and household caregivers. The research questions centre on the presentation of a descriptive picture of patterns of educational access for fostered children and on the understanding of their correlates and causes. To this end the main research question is:
What are the main differences in terms of meaningful access to education between fostered and biological children in Savelugu-Nanton district and how may they be explained?

Addressing this question requires attention to five sub-questions as follows:

- What is the prevalence of fostering in Ghana, the Northern Region and in Savelugu-Nanton?
- What are the key characteristics of fostered children?
- What are the social, cultural and economic reasons for fostering?
- What are the effects of fostering on meaningful educational access and progression?
- How are fosterage, its motivations and effects evolving?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Fosterage in Dagbon

The practice and tradition of children being reared by carers other than their biological parents, including through various forms of fostering (some of which might more properly be termed 'adoption') is common in Africa generally, especially in West Africa, and in northern Ghana and among the Dagomba particularly. DHS data from 16 African countries indicate that between 5% (Burundi) and 28% (Botswana) of children are fostered; while 15% of households in Ghana as a whole are found to contain at least one foster child (see Akresh, 2009:977). Goody's (1973) study of the Gonja ethnic group, neighbours of the Dagomba in northern Ghana found that approximately 20% of children are fostered at any point in time, although many more are fostered at some time during their youth (see Zimmerman, 2003:558).

Mahama explains the practices of fosterage among the Dagomba in general terms, emphasising that when children are 'fostered out', the foster parent becomes the responsible guardian where decisions regarding the child are concerned, so that parents are largely divested of responsibility for the child. Typically, children are fostered after the age of around 5. Boys are most often sent to paternal uncles and girls to aunts, but other relatives also act as guardians, including grandparents, although children brought-up by grandparents are considered 'spoiled'. Non-relatives may also be foster-parents, especially in the case of family friends who are known for being experts in a profession, or in the case of mallams who may receive children for training (Mahama, 2004:146).

Fostering relationships are part of wider traditions of kinship among the Dagomba, whereby upbringing and socialisation of children takes place in the context of extended family networks. Extended families are organised around patrilineal relationships and custody of children is also patrilineal. Consequently,

> Dagomba say that children cannot be taken to the father's side because they are already there and there is no term for fostering by the paternal relatives, nevertheless it is axiomatic that sons should be given to their father's sisters so that they will be stricter in rearing them and will not spoil them. (Oppong, 1977:14)

In the absence of the father, the patrilineal family takes care of a child, except that it is customary for a child to remain with its mother until weaned or until around five years old (Mahama, 2004:120-1). Accordingly, children are usually given to the custody of the father, his sister or mother in the event of divorce or of the mother's death, whereas children 'fostered' to the mother, typically by her brother remain 'hers'. Indeed the mother and her blood relatives may be argued to have more influence in directing the upbringing, schooling and work of these children, with potential implications for the schooling of fostered, when compared to biological children. Moreover, particular roles in the upbringing of children are often exercised by close relatives of parents. A child's 'social parents' according to Dagbon tradition are often paternal or maternal relatives who have exercised a customary 'right' to raise and train children, often their nieces and nephews. These customary rights differ according to professional group and personal circumstances, but fosterage is practiced widely across the social groups in Dagbon (Oppong, 1973:43-44). According to custom, the 'claim' of a relative over a child may be strong, particularly in the case of the father's sister whose request "to take a daughter can scarcely be denied because of her influential position in the

family" (Oppong, 1973:45). Notably, when a girl has been fostered by her father's sister it is to her that the girl's suitors will pay their respects.

While fostering relationships are most often close family relationships which serve a number of possible functions as discussed below, it is clear that one aspect of the relationship consists in providing children to 'serve' or work as well as to be trained, particularly in domestic labour and in agriculture. In this regard, the Dagmoba may be considered to perceive the fostering of a child in part an 'opportunity' for the acquisition of an 'asset'. Abukari explains that when a girl is fostered, most often to an aunt or grandmother, it is often said in traditional parlance that the child is given "so that she can fetch water" (Abukari, 2008). In Abukari's view, the fact that the child is in some sense regarded as a 'gift' in part explains why foster children may be treated as 'assets', why some biological parents do not follow-up closely on the children's treatment and why some foster parents prefer to keep foster children at home for domestic work or to send them out to work in farming or petty trading (Abukari, 2008). In relation to the Gonja of northern Ghana who also practise fostering widely, Goody describes the obligations of the foster-child by way of a 'debt' payable to the foster parent in return for their upbringing. Among the Gonja, the services offered by the foster parent in terms of care, support and training build an obligation which the child must repay; described in Goody's terms as part of the 'reciprocities of rearing' (Goody, 1973).

However, it is customary for all Dagomba children to work in the household or farm, so that no clear-cut distinction may be drawn between the roles of fostered and biological children. The distinctive occupational aspect of fosterage is, perhaps most clearly demonstrated, in regard to the traditional Dagbon professions. In these cases, the practices of fostering were historically well-defined. Although still in existence, these professions are found currently to be somewhat in decline. Such children may be reared and trained by foster or adoptive parents under several kinds of arrangement. Oppong discusses these, distinguishing between fostering and adoption. In the latter case, a child is transferred according to a ritual, traditionally having been chosen by divination. According to custom, drummers were recruited in this way, a practice termed *Zuguliem*, by which an adopted child would serve the foster household but would also be valued and respected highly as a member of a socially important profession to which fosterage served as the main recruitment mechanism (Oppong 1973:47-8).

Another traditional practice, termed *Talma*, involved the 'pawning' of children as 'collateral' to serve distant and wealthy relatives in return for money, especially when competing for 'skins' or traditional titles. Abukari describes the tradition of *Talma* as a practice in detail, explaining that a child fostered under *Talma* would typically remain in the foster home until the money borrowed was paid in full; and that should the child die, the father would be obliged to send another as a replacement (Abukari, 2008). The cultural importance of fostering traditions is underlined by the ceremonial practices that surround fostering practices. Abukari considers the case of fostering a daughter to a father's sister and explains that fostering would often follow the 'betrothal' by a man of one of his wives to one of his 'sisters' (including cousins) at the time of his marriage. This 'betrothal' means that the sister would be chosen to undertake certain rituals during the man's wife's pregnancy, would perform an 'outdooring' ceremony upon the child's birth, and, should the child be a girl, would foster the child once it was weaned (Abukari, 2008).

While the traditions of fostering may not be fully understood by way of functional analysis; since they reflect a wider conception of kinship and identity, it is useful to consider the functions cited in the literature in relation to the potential impacts of fosterage on educational

access and attainment. Oppong (1973:48-9) summarises these functions in terms of kinship solidarity, responsible parenting; the distribution of wealth, knowledge and prestige and the distribution of child-rearing responsibilities and of child-labour. In respect of the first, fosterage plays a part in knitting the family together more closely, because children come to know their relatives better and adults are linked together by rearing each other's children. Secondly, foster-parents may be considered more mature and experienced than the biological parents, and consequently more capable guardians, including because they may be less apt to 'spoil' or 'pamper' the child. Abukari explains this motivation for fosterage, emphasising discipline, development of personal qualities and the development of Dagbon citizenship:

> The contention was that fostered children tended to develop into better citizens capable of withstanding odds and hardships and worthy of social respect than children raised by their biological parents. It was not unusual for male suitors to decline to marry girls who were brought up by their biological parents. This idea therefore contributed immensely to the promotion of fosterage in Dagbon. (Abukari, 2008).

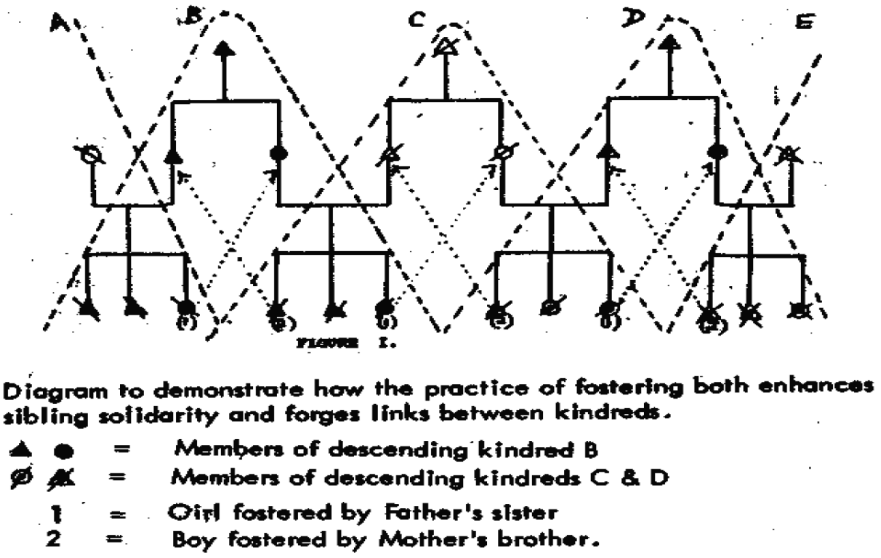
Oppong concurs, writing that "indeed parents are not even thought to be the best or most competent people to bring up their children and should not keep all of them." (Oppong, 1973:44). With regard to the distribution of wealth, fosterage serves to redistribute the wealth of richer adult family members, since they help to rear their siblings' children. As well as redistributing wealth, knowledge and prestige are also shared in this way, especially where a sibling is a *mallam*, teacher, chief or professional. Concerning the role of fosterage in redistributing both the responsibilities and benefits (in terms of child labour) of child-rearing, Oppong explains that traditionally, the services of children were very valuable to foster parents, particularly otherwise childless adults, for the purposes of performing small but essential tasks in the family compound such as fetching water and running errands; and on the farm including caring for livestock and scaring birds. Moreover, she argues that the "household which has no child labour is not really economically and domestically viable" (Oppong, 1973:48), because of the wide range of small yet time-consuming and necessary tasks normally allocated to children, which relieve the adults and allow them to undertake other work.

In addition to the functions considered, a further role played by a fostered child when living with maternal relatives is as 'replacement' for the mother. As well as being a means whereby the foster child's siblings maintain contact with their maternal kin; in the cases of certain professional groups, recruitment to the group is served by replacing women who marry out with one or more of their children or grandchildren. Mahama (2004) explains a similar function of fosterage in that it serves to unite the maternal and paternal sides of an extended family. For example, it is customary that when a man gives his daughter in marriage, the husband may then return a child to his wife's father's home in order for the children who live with their father to know their mother's side through the sibling who has 'returned' there.

Oppong presents a diagrammatic representation of fosterage relationships in Dagbon, reproduced in Figure 2 below, which illustrates the role fostering plays in strengthening kinship ties between siblings and lines of maternal and paternal descent. The father in kindred C has, for illustrative purposes, a daughter and a son. The daughter has three children with a member of kindred D, two girls and a boy. One girl is fostered to her sister-in-law and a boy to her brother as represented by the dotted diagonal lines. Her husband fosters a boy from his sister and she fosters a girl from her brother so that there are three children living with her, one biological daughter, one fostered boy from the father's side and one girl from the mother's side. In this way, solidarity between the woman and her own natal home (especially

her siblings) is enhanced and links are forged between her and her husband's siblings and thereby between the two kindreds C and D.

Figure 2: Fostering Relationships and Kinship among the Dagomba



Source: Oppong (1977:16)

Turning to the role of fosterage in the redistribution of children, Abukari states that:

> When a couple was blessed with several children, the woman's family could send an appeal to foster one of the children (usually the youngest). Here, there was no distinction. The child could be a boy or a girl but fathers preferred giving out girls even if a boy was the youngest. (Abukari, 2008)

Two specific cases of fostering for these kinds of purposes stand out. The first case concerns the event of a relative's, or particularly a mother's death, when young children would typically be fostered by other family members, described by Goody (1975) as 'crisis fostering' while the second concerns the relief of the 'plight' of infertile women. Childless women, whether through infertility or other reasons including child mortality, are considered particularly worthy of receiving children through fostering in Dagbon.

A number of differences in both the prevalence and traditions of fostering in relation to boy and girl children have been mentioned already. While no representative statistics are available on fosterage by gender in Dagbon or Savelugu-Nanton, culture and tradition suggest that not only are girls more often fostered but that there may be greater implications for both work and education. Abukari argues that:

> Whether fostered by an aunt, a sister or a grandmother, girls were generally over taxed. They were always the last to go to bed in the night and the first to wake up at dawn. Their activities included sweeping, fetching water, cutting and carrying fuel wood, performing a host of household chores, picking shea nuts and harvesting crops. (Abukari, 2008)

In addition, the requirements of marriage for girls in Dagbon may place greater pressure on fostered girls. Abukari explains that traditionally, girls of marriageable age acquire certain items or property to be taken to the marital home and that where foster-parents are less able

or willing to assist than their biological counterparts, girls may experience greater pressure to enter paid work. The items concerned can include wax prints, veils, head gear, bowls, buckets, pots, cooking utensils, hand bags, suitcases and sandals, among others (Abukari, 2008). Abukari relates the need among fostered girls to acquire such items to the practice of *kayaye*, a form of migrant labour often undertaken by Dagomba girls; suggesting that:

> It is important to note that most of the northern girls parading the streets of Accra, Kumasi and other southern cities are fostered children who are struggling to acquire property to aid their foster parents in their efforts to adequately marry them off. (Abukari, 2008)

2.2 Education in Dagbon: Historical perspective

Clearly there are a great many reasons for the relative economic and educational disadvantage affecting the Savelugu-Nanton district. Moreover, in educational terms it is worth noting that the Dagomba areas of northern Ghana have been associated with particularly low levels of access ever since the arrival of formal education in colonial times. Oppong notes in her 1966 study that:

> … certain factors appear to have inhibited educational development, even as far as the limited opportunities would allow ... An examination of data from the 1960 Census shows that school attendance in the Dagomba area is strikingly low, even in comparison with neighbouring peoples of northern Ghana ... Nor is it simply a case of schools not being available. Many schools opened before and since 1960 have had great difficulty in trying to fill their vacant places. (Oppong, 1966:17)

Some, including Oppong, have attributed this in part to cultural factors particular to Dagbon, including the relative efficacy of the Dagomba's own traditional education practices. Even as early as in 1909, it seems that formal education was making notably slower progress in Dagbon than in most other areas in Ghana. Oppong cites the example of the first recruitment tour of Western Dagbon in that year, when "at palavers with chiefs he impressed upon them the necessity of the young men's learning English and selected several chiefs to send two boys each to Tamale school" (Oppong, 1966:20). She explains some of the reasons given for resistance to schooling in her enquiries among the Dagomba, related especially to the need for child-labour:

> Typical replies to the question, "Why do all your children not go to school?" are: "If they did, who would feed them? Who would farm? The cattle herders cannot go to school; can we throw our cattle away? If the grass cutters go to school it is very hard for the horse owners." Etc. Even a man who has been educated himself will say "Some boys must go to school, others herd cattle, others cut grass." (Oppong, 1966:19)

The agricultural economy in Dagbon relies somewhat upon children's work. In addition, youth migration and parental attitudes, historically at least, played an important role in discouraging enrolment. Oppong found that parents' fears and prejudices that educated children may spurn traditional culture, customs and values, including respect for elders and for their illiterate parents in addition to their fear that educated children may be unwilling to farm and may be tempted to migrate lay in part behind historically low enrolment (Oppong,1966:23).

In the period following independence, access to basic education expanded rapidly in Ghana. But Oppong found that indicators remained especially low by national standards in Dagbon. She also notes that, partly as a consequence of low education levels, only 2% of employed Dagomba held professional technical or administrative posts according to the 1960 census – one quarter of the national average and the lowest of the four Northern traditional states (Oppong, 1966:18). In the same census, only 11.8% of the male population aged 6-14 was found to be attending primary school, but with another 32.2% in Koranic schools. Moreover, Oppong argues that cultural attitudes towards Koranic and other forms of education among the Dagomba may have also inhibited enrolment in local district schools. She suggests that historically, little distinction was made between forms of 'book learning' and that Koranic education may indeed have been the preferred alternative (Oppong, 1966:23). The importance of Koranic education remains notable in Savelugu-Nanton, where a number of state schools end tuition at midday to permit instruction in Arabic in the afternoons. Children who do not attend these schools often attend Koranic schools outside of school hours.

Oppong cites an early school-based study in the immediate post-colonial period, which indicates the persistence of resistance to state-schooling in Dagbon, particularly for girls. This case-study of a village school covered the period 1956-1964:

> No girls and less than 15% of the boys had been enrolled voluntarily by inhabitants of the village. More than half of the villagers' children in the school had been recruited by the chief and titled officials under external pressure; the rest were compulsorily recruited at random by the sanitary inspector. Of the children sent voluntarily, about a third were the children of outsiders temporarily employed in the village, teachers, policemen etc ... This school does not appear to be an isolated example. (Oppong, 1966:22)

As mentioned above, part of the reason for the apparent reluctance to send children to school is explained in terms of the established indigenous educational practices. These include a custom of sending children away for education or training under arrangements of fosterage. Oppong argues that the relatively sophisticated traditional system, integral to the dominant subsistence economy remained viable, at least in the 1970s, in terms of preparing young people for their adult occupational and social roles (Oppong, 1973:71). In more general terms, when considering the variety of responses to the introduction of state schooling across Ghana, she contends that the apparently unenthusiastic Dagomba response may be the result of a number of contributory factors, including the indigenous system of social organisation as well as that of education. More specifically, she suggests the response is linked to traditional authority structures, cultural beliefs and practices, to the relatively low intensity of foreign contacts, the social status of women and the traditional patterns of social and spatial mobility (Oppong, 1966:17).

Mahama outlines the traditional roles played by children, some of which may be considered relatively antithetical to schooling, while others themselves include a considerable education and training dimension. These kinds of work continue to be performed by children, albeit more often in combination with schooling. With regard to boys:

> He goes to the farm to do light jobs such as sowing of grains, driving away animals or birds ... At home he would be made to look after sheep or fowls. He may be given one hen as his own. This introduces him to the principles of private ownership ... As the boy grows he is made to do weeding in the farm, which is for his guardian. If the child is in a Muslim home, the first lessons in Islam are given to him ... He will take the

> lessons in the morning before he goes to the farm and in the evening when he comes back from the farm ... all children of the various social classes are introduced to their professions. (Mahama, 2004:147-8)

While in the case of girls:

> … she is taught how to pound soup ingredients in a mortar, how to sweep the room, and how to wash dishes. She also learns how to hold and look after babies when the guardian is engaged in some domestic work. As she grows, she is introduced to cooking, washing of clothes, fetching and carrying firewood or water. She is also taught how to make some types of food for sale. (Mahama, 2004:147-8)

Oppong describes children's work similarly, emphasising that all children are gainfully employed from an early age. The importance of the tasks performed by children is such that she argues that:

> … compulsory full-time education for every child over five or six will entail an agricultural revolution in which the services of the young may be disposed of without hardship. This revolution is already in process however as mechanisation of agriculture gets underway and systems of co-operative use of farm machinery become established. (Oppong, 1973:72)

On this point, despite more than thirty years having passed, while there is some commercial faming in Savelugu-Nanton along with some mechanisation in processing, in the form for example of a factory for shea butter extraction, unmechanised subsistence farming remains by far the dominant form of agriculture and livelihood. The process Oppong describes has been slow at best and the role of children in agricultural work remains important.

2.3 Contemporary Education in Savelugu-Nanton District

This section reports the most recent indicators available on educational access in Savelugu-Nanton district and provides context for the study of education among fostered children. Table 1 below shows the results for adult literacy indicators in the district from a UNICEF nutrition intervention evaluation survey conducted between 2001 and 2004. All figures show gradual improvement over the period but remained extremely low in 2004. Around one fifth of household heads could read by 2004 with a slightly lower proportion being able to write. Less than 10% had ever attended primary school. Among primary care-givers (mainly women), the figures were remarkably low, with less than 5% being able to read/write or having ever attended primary school in 2004.

With regard to children's (aged 6-18) enrolment in primary school, the UNICEF surveys also found tangible improvement over the period, while overall figures remained low. By 2004 around half of all children were enrolled, rising 6 percentage points from 2001, but with a constant gender disparity of around 17 percentage points. More detailed information is available in the Ministry of Education's EMIS[1] (Education Management Information System) data. Table 2 below summarises the key indicators for 2003/4, which are compared to the most recent figures – from 2008/9, to illustrate recent trends. The Primary Net Admission Rate (NAR) in 2003/4 was 23.5%, being slightly higher for boys and lower for girls. This

[1] EMIS data are collected as part of an annual Ministry of Education school census. Population figures are derived from the 2000 Census conducted by The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) and an estimated population growth rate is used to estimate values beyond 2000.

compares the number of children of the appropriate age admitted to Primary 1 (P1) with the total number of children of the appropriate age and indicates that less than a quarter of pupils of age six were admitted to Primary 1. The Gross Admission Rate (GAR) compares the number of children enrolled in Primary 1 with the total number of children of the appropriate age and showed a much higher figure of 76.2%. In line with the prevalence of 'over-age' enrolment in Ghana, the comparison between NAR and GAR indicates a high incidence of over-age enrolment in P1, but a relatively low level of enrolment overall. This is clarified in the primary-level Gross and Net Enrolment Rates (GER and NER). In particular, the primary NER which compares the enrolment of children of primary age with the primary-age population indicates that in 2003/4 less than half of all of-age children were enrolled, again with a higher rate for boys compared to girls. The CWIQ (Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire) survey in 2003 which has a design intended to be representative at the district level found the primary NER in Savelugu-Nanton to be 53.9%, slightly higher but broadly consistent with the EMIS[2]. The lower secondary NAR indicates that less than 7% of children of the expected admission age for lower secondary school were actually admitted to lower secondary school in 2003/4. The NER is also very low, with less than one fifth of children in the appropriate age group enrolled in 2003/4, being less than 13% for girls.

Table 1: Adult literacy in Savelugu-Nanton 2001 and 2004 (%)

	Household Head (HHH)			**Primary Care Giver (PCG)**		
	Literacy Reading	**Literacy Writing**	**Primary School Attendance**	**Literacy Reading**	**Literacy Writing**	**Primary School Attendance**
2001	17.8	14.0	5.8	1.4	1.0	2.0
2004	20.1	17.8	9.2	3.0	2.5	4.4

N=1,685 (HHH) 1,668 (PCG)

Source: UNICEF (2005)

Table 2: Basic Education Enrolment Indicators for Savelugu-Nanton District 2003/4

Level	**Indicator**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Primary	GER	0.688	0.809	0.558
	NER	0.490	0.559	0.417
	GAR	0.762	0.841	0.683
	NAR	0.235	0.247	0.223
Lower Secondary	GER	0.507	0.637	0.328
	NER	0.192	0.239	0.127
	GAR	0.562	0.709	0.369
	NAR	0.066	0.089	0.043

Source: MoESS EMIS data 2003/4

When compared to the figures for 2003/4 some figures for 2008/9 (see Table 3) show dramatic improvement. Most notably, the primary NAR is found to have increased threefold since 2004, so that by 2009, three quarters of pupils of the expected admission age were actually admitted to P1. The primary NER also increased so that more than three quarters of primary-school age children were enrolled by 2008/9, with a difference of around fifteen percentage points between boys and girls. One key policy initiative introduced in the

[2] There are typically differences between survey and administrative data in Ghana owing to differences in definition and in groups included according to survey design etc.

intervening period has been the Capitation Grant, which may have been an important influence especially where poverty was a barrier to age-appropriate entry as was the case in Savelugu-Nanton. Enrolments at lower secondary level in general did not show the same level of improvements when compared to the primary level. The NER remained low with just over a quarter of children of the appropriate age being enrolled in 2008/9. The NAR rose to almost 19%, however, indicating a notable improvement in age-appropriate entry, consistent with pupils moving through primary school at lower ages. Further, the GER increased from 50.7 to 72.6%, indicating an increase in total enrolment regardless of age at the lower secondary level.

National figures show a primary NER of 87.4% and an NAR of 71.5% alongside a lower secondary NER of 47.8% and an NAR of 43.6%, considerably higher than in Savelugu-Nanton. Differences between net and gross figures are also greater in Savelugu-Nanton (indicating a greater prevalence of 'over-age enrolment'), as are gender gaps.

Table 3: Basic Education Enrolment Indicators for Savelugu-Nanton District 2008/9

Level	Indicator	Total	Boys	Girls
Primary	GER	0.832	0.921	0.738
	NER	0.781	0.857	0.699
	GAR	0.885	0.965	0.805
	NAR	0.743	0.818	0.668
Lower Secondary	GER	0.726	0.807	0.614
	NER	0.278	0.292	0.258
	GAR	0.772	0.857	0.661
	NAR	0.188	0.204	0.167

Source: MoESS EMIS data 2008/9

The 2009 EMIS data also included results from the BECE (Basic Education Certificate Examination). Of the 1,104 pupils in JHS 3, 921 sat the four core subject examinations with around one third achieving a pass mark in maths, English and social studies and around three fifths in science. The number of boys who sat the examinations was more than double that of girls, and boys' pass rates were five to thirteen percentage points higher. The BECE pass rates are around 60% in all of the core subjects at the national level, much higher than in Savelugu-Nanton; and gender differences are notably smaller in percentage point terms nationally. The SNDA (Savelugu-Nanton District Administration) confirms that gender disparities are a particular issue:

> There exists a gender parity gap. The situation emanates from poor retention of the girl child in school especially at the JSS[3] level. The possible reason for this situation could be that at the JSS level, the girl child begins performing the multiple domestic roles such as fetching water, cooking, washing sweeping and cleaning just to mention a few in the family and thus has little time for academic work. (SNDA, 2011)

The SNDA also reports that performance in WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination) is also poor:

> In 2005, whilst four students qualified to enter the University from Savelugu SSS, five representing 3.5% of students sitting for the examination qualified from Pong-

[3] Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) are now known as Junior High Schools (JHS).

> Tamale SSS. The reasons for the abysmal performance at the SSS though could result from poor teaching, are also partly due to the quality of students admitted. (SNDA, 2011)

EMIS data on the condition of schools show that around one third of public classrooms needed major repairs. With regard to teacher training, two thirds of teachers in public primary schools and one third in public lower secondary schools were untrained. More than four fifths of public basic schoolteachers were men compared to three fifths nationally. The proportions of trained teachers are considerably lower in Savelugu-Nanton than nationally. For example, only 10.9% of male public basic schoolteachers were trained in 2008/9, whereas nationally the figure was 56.9%. These findings accord with the SNDA's identification of key challenges in the education sector – which include trained teacher retention, early marriage; *kayaye*[4]; difficulties with school supervision; inadequate teacher accommodation (especially electricity); gender disparities and parental apathy with regard to education (SNDA, 2011).

Overall, summary indicators for the district show distinct disadvantage in both qualitative and quantitative terms, when compared to the national picture, particularly where girls and transition to secondary school are concerned.

2.4 Fostering and Education

In addition to the complex variety and range of fostering practices in West Africa, the relationships between fostering and children's schooling and work are ambivalent, complex and varied. There is considerable variation in fostering practices between cultures and the functions of fosterage and accordingly its effects on schooling may depend upon the culture and context as well as on the child's gender. With regard to schooling, for some children, fosterage may be intended to improve educational opportunity, while for others it may prevent or inhibit enrolment (Pilon, 2003:4). Pilon argues that the nature of relationships between the family of origin and the host family are key, centring on who pays for the children's upkeep and schooling costs and on the extent of authority, responsibility and affection in host family relationships. He points out that:

> ... actual situations are highly diverse. It is likely that the lower the family of origin's involvement, especially financially (or in kind), the higher the risk that the foster child will suffer mistreatment in the host family (Pilon, 2003:19).

Indeed, the importance of intra-household relationships on child welfare and education is not limited to Africa. For example, in a study by Case (2000) it was found that in the USA step and foster or adopted children receive on average one year less education than children living with their biological mother.

Becker's (1991) approach to family resource allocation suggests that part of the economic disadvantage experienced by foster children may be due to their weaker genetic connection with guardians when compared to biological children – a "Cinderella effect" (Zimmerman, 2003:561). With regard to access to education, this effect may operate through a number of mechanisms. In low-income contexts, even where adequate supply exists, households may be constrained from providing education for all children, or for all children equally since a major barrier to achieving universal enrolment in basic education consists in the costs of schooling be they direct in terms of fees, indirect as in the case of books and uniforms or opportunity

[4] Literally 'head porterage' but referring more generally to migration for menial work in the cities of southern Ghana by youths, especially girls, from the north.

costs in terms of foregone earnings - in money or in kind from child labour. Moreover, some forms of work, such as cattle herding, are more antithetical to schooling than others, but also households may employ a more collectivist rationale in deciding whom to educate, with a focus on diversifying family income sources and maintaining traditional divisions of labour in domestic and agricultural work. Oppong explains in historical context:

> Even a man who has been educated himself will say "Some boys must go to school, others herd cattle, others cut grass." They realise only too well that with the present state of the agricultural economy it would be difficult to dispense with the services of all the under-fifteens. (Oppong, 1966:23)

Even where children do enrol in school, pressures to 'drop-out' may be overwhelming, based on the 'pull' effects of potential benefits from work and the 'push' effects of schooling costs and, in some cases, poor performance owing to low school quality or irregular attendance.

While economists typically focus on economic motivations for fostering such as income, labour supply and resource allocation, anthropologists often emphasise kin obligations and traditions. Combining insights from both traditions, Isiugo-Abanihe (1985) identifies four major motives for fostering children in the West African context. It might be expected that these would have rather different impacts on children's schooling access and outcomes. Firstly, fostering may be motivated by a wish to improve a child's social mobility and opportunity, including by improving access to schooling. Secondly it may be to manage an economic shock to the biological home such as a death. Thirdly, it may be to satisfy the labour needs of the recipient household. Finally, it may be to meet kinship obligations and rights. In the first and second cases it may be expected that fostering could, potentially at least, improve the access to education of the fostered child relative to remaining in the biological home. In the third it may be that fostering reduces the fostered child's access to education relative to her siblings, while in the fourth the outcome is more ambiguous and depends on the nature of kinship obligations. Moreover, sending and receiving households will typically differ not only in their resources and liquidity constraints but also in their preferences for education, among other factors (see Marazyan, 2009).

Based on a study in Ghana's neighbour Cote D'Ivoire cited by Pilon (2003), De Vreyer notes that education expenses earmarked for foster children are typically lower than those allotted to the household head's own children (De Vreyer, 1994). In the context of Senegal, Vandermeersch remarks that:

> … sometimes these children are less well-fed and work more than the others in the household, under the pretext of giving them a good upbringing ... these children are practically thought of as domestic servants, and that can only have a negative influence on their scholastic performance (Vandermeersch, 2000:431).

Pilon contends that:

> … their chances of repeating, failing and dropping out are higher. This reality involves boys as well as girls, but the problem is assuredly more acute for girls, who are requested to perform more domestic chores (Pilon 2003:19).

Marazyan (2009:24) found that in Cameroon fostering takes place mainly because of kinship obligations and not because host families are better able to care for the children they receive; and that consequently, the presence of foster children in a household may tighten liquidity

constraints, reducing the ability of the parents to pursue their biological children's education, indicating that fostering may also impact negatively on the education of biological children.

The effects of fosterage vary by context, however, and in South Africa, Zimmerman found that because fostering is not strongly associated with domestic labour and often means children moving to families more able or more apt to send them to school, fostered children are more likely to attend in that country (Zimmerman, 2003:558). Zimmerman also notes, however, that in the context of Cote D'Ivoire, Ainsworth (1996) reaches a quite different conclusion using a similar approach, finding that the demand for domestic labour *is* a key motivation for fosterage, with negative consequences for school enrolment. The dominant reasons for fosterage are thus an important determinant of its effects. The international literature typically emphasises the negative consequences of fosterage on children's education and welfare (for example Haddad and Hoddinott, 1994; UNICEF, 1999), associating it with child labour, while acknowledging that fosterage is also sometimes practiced to improve educational opportunities (see Akresh, 2009). This is illustrated by Akresh with a policy-oriented example from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child report (2002):

> The committee recommends that [Burkina Faso] urgently take all measures necessary to put a stop to the practice of "fostering" and "traditional adoption" (cited in Akresh, 2009:977)

In his own empirical modelling using data from Burkina Faso, Akresh (2009) finds that households experiencing negative income shocks are more likely to foster children 'out' (send them); those with more biological girls than boys are more likely to foster a girl out and those further from a primary school are more likely to foster out and less likely to foster children 'in' (receive them). Also, households with 'better' extended family networks in terms of more educated and better-off relatives were found to be more likely to foster out. Related work by Akresh also in Burkina Faso found these children are not disadvantaged in terms of school enrolment (Akresh, 2007). These findings thus cast some doubt on the policy recommendation above and emphasise the complexity and contextuality of the practices and their effects.

In the context of Ghana as a whole, Rolleston (2009:38) found that when compared to biological children of the household head, other relatives (excluding grandchildren) were 7% less likely to have ever attended school, other things being equal. When examining their progress in the presence of indicators of important background and contextual factors, the relative likelihood of foster children completing primary school (when compared to never attending school) is only 28% of that of a biological son or daughter of the household head. In relation to completing secondary school the figure is 19%, so that in relation to higher levels of basic access, fosterage appears in Ghana as a whole to be associated with notably lower progress.

2.5 Fosterage and Schooling in Dagbon

Clearly, the practices of fosterage among the Dagomba are complex and deep-rooted. Since the traditions of fosterage and their functions are not readily separable and are interwoven and overlapping, the effects of fosterage on schooling are not straightforwardly identifiable and are indeed highly contingent. Moreover, it is clear that traditions, their effects and functions are evolving owing to cultural dynamics which are interlinked with rapid social, demographic and economic change in Dagbon. In particular, it may be argued that these kinds of change have had a significant impact in recent years in terms of the evolution of

some traditional elements of social and economic organisation in Dagbon; including through urbanisation, mass education, mass communication, migration, farm technology and new employment opportunities.

An important reason for lower levels of educational access among fostered children in Dagbon, as elsewhere, consists in the differences that may exist between the expectations of fostered and biological children in terms of work. The issue of work is well illustrated in historical context:

> sometimes parents wish to send their children to school but are prevented from doing so by the 'family head', a child's foster parent or fear of displeasing the chief. In one graphic case recorded, an educated civil servant had 'fostered' four of his senior brothers' sons and sent them to school as well as sending five of his own thirteen children, but two of his own sons fostered by his elder brother had been kept at home to act as grooms and grass cutters. Their foster father would not let them go to school in spite of their father's protestations. (Oppong, 1966:23)

Moreover, the role of relatives other than parents in children's upbringing may have the implication that parental influence in the direction of a child's education and career is more limited than in some other cultures. Making reference to an early study of Dagbon culture from the 1930s, Oppong explains that:

> In the extreme case a father's sibling may come to claim a son on pain of death, or again grandparents may curse their children with death, disease or hell for not giving them some grandchildren to serve them. (Oppong, 1973:44)

While some families in Dagbon do send children to live with relatives (particularly in urban areas) for the purposes of better access to formal schooling, the literature does not suggest this to be a dominant reason for fosterage. Oppong argues, however, that fosterage for the purpose of access to schooling was notable in the early years of state education. Because of the long distances to school until relatively recent years, children, most often boys, would often be fostered to relatives living in towns, especially the regional capital Tamale. While living in town, the boys would perform domestic chores in teachers' or clerks' households in return for a place to stay (Oppong, 1973:70). This practice has much in common with the more traditional form of fosterage whereby children were sent away to learn trades. At the basic level at least, however, travelling distances to school in Dagbon are now considerably reduced, owing to the much increased number of schools, reducing the need for fosterage purely to facilitate educational access. Kinship obligations connected with labour needs along with crisis-fostering may be considered more persuasive explanations, particularly given the historically low levels of participation in schooling among the Dagomba.

In the context of a relatively poor region like Dagbon, fosterage may present a significant financial burden and tighten liquidity constraints when compared to households which contain only biological children and as a result, owing to differences in status and role it may be that fostered children lose out in educational access terms. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the practices of fosterage in Dagbon are associated with a number of other relevant phenomena, particularly those connected to adherence to traditional culture and consequently to education preferences, but also relating to poverty, family size and so on. Few detailed studies have been conducted on fosterage and access to education and the author is not aware of any recent study in the context of Dagbon, with the exception of Abukari's (2008) unpublished work on fostered girls discussed below.

2.6 Fostered Girls and Education in Savelugu-Nanton

Abukari explains that one reason for a greater impact of fostering among girls in Dagbon may be that these girls are typically fostered by women; and that men, who are most often the household heads, may not regard these girls as part of their responsibility in respect of meeting schooling costs:

> In traditional Dagbon, almost all fostered girls live with female relatives. In other words, it is women who foster the girls. It is very common to see homes where an educated man refuses to foster his daughters to his female relatives but where his wife or wives go to foster several girls to the home. In such situations, the biological children will be going to school while the fostered children remain in the house to work. The reason is that, the man of the house may not be financially endowed or he may be simply unwilling to take on the additional responsibility of educating his wife's foster children; at the same time, he is not in a position (since the foster children are not directly related to him) to prevail on his wife to send them to school. (Abukari, 2008)

In addition, foster mothers may expect more of fostered girls in respect of work, while at the same time the importance of the foster parent's obligations with respect to preparation for marriage may take precedence over schooling. According to Abukari (2008) and in relation to the obligations of a foster-mother, "even in modern times, education plays second fiddle to the concept of proper marriage" (Abukari, 2008).

Abukari (2008) argues that when very young, the opportunity costs of sending fostered girls to school may be somewhat lower than subsequently, when at the age of around nine and upwards the girl's potential contribution in terms of labour increases. It is at this point that difficulties tend to surface for girls who have already begun schooling, he argues. There may be a decline in both attendance and performance at school, when it is suggested that "unsuspecting teachers vent their anger on the unfortunate girl, thus paving a way for an inevitable drop out" (Abukari 2008). However, it is in adolescence that the demand for the girls' labour may increase most significantly. Abukari continues:

> … this is the period foster parents grossly disregard girls' education with impunity and send them out to other villages to gather shea-nuts, harvest groundnuts, maize, guinea-corn and rice and in recent times, coerce them to travel down south to engage in the head porter business popularly known as *kayaye* (Abukari, 2008).

Abukari undertook a study of fosterage of girls in three primary schools and two junior secondary schools in Savelugu township, which may be considered a peri-urban area, in 2008. Using a survey questionnaire, he collected data on with whom the 383 girls selected schools lived. The results are summarised in Tables 4 to 7 below. Examining school enrolments across the sampled schools, he found that approximately two thirds of pupils enrolled at both primary and JHS levels were boys. It is important to note that his study began by identifying girls at school and hence does not consider the potentially large number of fostered girls who are 'out of school' and results should be interpreted conditional on this selection. As shown in Table 4, he found that typically between a third and a half of girls in the sample were fostered i.e. living with neither of their biological parents. Most often they were fostered to an aunt, but fostering to a grandmother was also common. Excluding fosterage by grandparents, Abukari found that 26% of the total sample of girls were fostered. Rates of fosterage were high in the English-Arabic schools shown in italics in Table 4 (all of the sample except JHS D). Rates were slightly higher at primary than JHS level, although as

the sample is small it cannot be concluded that this indicates a higher prevalence of drop-out among fostered girls.

Abukari asked a small sample of biological fathers questions in relation to their own and their children's education and work, to the number of children they had living in foster homes and to who provides school uniform for fostered children. He asked a small sample of fostered girls about their schooling and work and about their foster relationships. In a small survey of teachers, he asked about perceptions of educational performance of fostered girls. In each case the sample numbered twenty individuals. The results are summarised in Tables 5 to 7 below and are expressed in percentages. Clearly the samples are small and the results not generalisable, but may be considered illustrative of the issues investigated.

Table 5 shows that the vast majority of biological parents surveyed were illiterate. More than half had two or more of their children in foster homes and around two-thirds visited them less than once a month, with a quarter never visiting at all. Most received no reports of how the children were treated. The provision of school uniforms was found to be the responsibility of foster parents in the vast majority of cases. When the question of contributions to education was asked in more detail, just less than half of biological parents said they gave some form of assistance, including by helping with food or school materials costs (see Abukari, 2008).

Table 4: With Whom Schoolgirls in Five Schools Savelugu-Nanton Lived (%)

School[5]	**Living with**							
	Biological Parents			**Foster Parents**			**Total**	**% Fostered**
	Both parents	**Mother only**	**Father only**	**Grand-mother**	**Sister**	**Aunt**		
Primary A	22	6	0	12	1	4	45	**37.8**
Primary B	18	2	0	4	1	22	47	**57.4**
Primary C	42	7	1	16	2	20	88	**45.6**
All Primary	82	15	1	32	4	46	180	**45.0**
JHS D	27	4	0	17	2	30	151	**32.5**
JHS B	22	3	0	8	3	16	52	**43.3**
All JHS	93	20	2	25	5	46	203	**37.4**
Total	**175**	**35**	**3**	**57**	**9**	**92**	**383**	**41.3**

Source: Abukari (2008)

[5] School names anonymised

Table 5: Summary of Results of Questionnaire of Biological Parents (%)

Literacy	**Children in foster homes**			**Visits to children in foster homes**					**Provision of school uniforms**		**Reports of how fostered children are treated**	
Illiterate	1	2	>2	Weekly	Monthly	Bi-monthly	Ann-ually	never	Bio-logical	Foster	Yes	No
95	**40**	**40**	**20**	**5**	**30**	**35**	**5**	**25**	**10**	**90**	**15**	**85**

N=20
Source: Adapted from Abukari (2008)

Table 6 shows that the majority of foster parents were also illiterate and also finds that the provision of school uniforms fell to the foster parent in the vast majority of cases. Two thirds of fostered girls were found to assist in their foster parents' businesses, with most of those being involved in selling wares. 15% of these foster parents (identified from the school of one of their foster girls) also looked after foster children who were not attending school. In these cases foster parents said the children helped with chores and childcare (see Abukari, 2008).

When the girls themselves were questioned, two-thirds stated that the work they do for their foster parents interfered with their schooling. Among these, several said it affected their punctuality while others said it meant they had insufficient time for homework or that it affected their attendance. As shown in Table 7, just over half of teachers indicated that fostered girls' performance at school compared unfavourably with their peers living with biological parents, although none rated it as poor. They attributed disparities in performance to irregular attendance, lack of study at home and inadequate school equipment.

Table 6: Summary of Results of Questionnaire of Foster Parents (%)

Literacy	**Provision of school uniforms**		**Foster children's participation in business**		**Activities undertaken by foster children assisting in business**			**Household has other foster children not in school**
Illiterate	Biological	Foster	Assist	Don't assist	Selling wares	Carrying Goods to market	farming	
75	**10**	**90**	**65**	**35**	**77**	**15**	**8**	**15**

N=20
Source: Adapted from Abukari (2008)

Table 7: Summary of Results of Questionnaire to Teachers of Fostered Girls (%)

Performance of fostered girls at school				**Comparison of performance of fostered girls to those living with both biological parents**			**Reasons for relatively poor performance where this was cited**		
Very good	good	fair	poor	Better	Equal	Worse	Poor attendance	Lack of time to study	Lack of materials
5	**50**	**40**	**0**	**15**	**30**	**55**	**27**	**53**	**13**

N=20
Source: Adapted from Abukari (2008)

Abukari's study points then, to notable disadvantages in relation to schooling access and performance among fostered girls.

2.7 Summary

Since 2003/4, there have been dramatic improvements in access to basic education in Savelugu-Nanton, particularly regarding initial and timely enrolment at the primary level. Nonetheless, enrolment, particularly at lower secondary level remained very considerably below national levels in 2008/9. By national standards, examination achievement is very low, as are levels of gender parity in pupil enrolment and achievement and in terms of the training of the teaching force. In the past, over-age enrolment had been a particular issue, and it remains more of an issue than is the case nationally, especially at the lower secondary level. Educational disadvantage in the district has persisted since colonial times, owing to supply issues but also to local livelihoods, cultural attitudes and practices including agricultural patterns, preference for Koranic learning and traditional gender roles. Fosterage is an important cultural institution, which serves to strengthen kinship solidarity among a range of other functions, including meeting needs for child labour. Its effects on education are ambiguous, since traditionally it played a potentially positive role in the indigenous education system and was also used to improve access to education where distances to school from the biological home were an issue. Its association with domestic and farm work and the difficulties met in connection with school costs for foster children suggest a negative effect, however. Evidence on the effects of fosterage on education in the district is limited, but there is an indication for girls at least that the net effects of fosterage are typically to impair educational achievement and progress.

3. Methodology

A multi-stage design is followed in order to address the research questions identified in Section 1. In order to examine the context within which to locate the issues in Dagbon, analysis of the prevalence of fosterage and its potential impact on education is conducted using descriptive and modelling exercises employing data at the national, regional and district levels, described in the next section. The literature review has highlighted the contingency of relationships between fosterage and educational access outcomes; particularly in terms of the role of the reasons for and functions of the foster-relationship, but also depending on cultural attitudes towards schooling and the linkages between fosterage, culture and the household economy. These complex phenomena are not well captured in survey data. Quantitative analysis is therefore followed by a more in-depth qualitative study comprising analysis of two sets of semi-structured interviews – with key informants in the form of education professionals working in Savelugu-Nanton and with foster-carers in rural communities in the district.

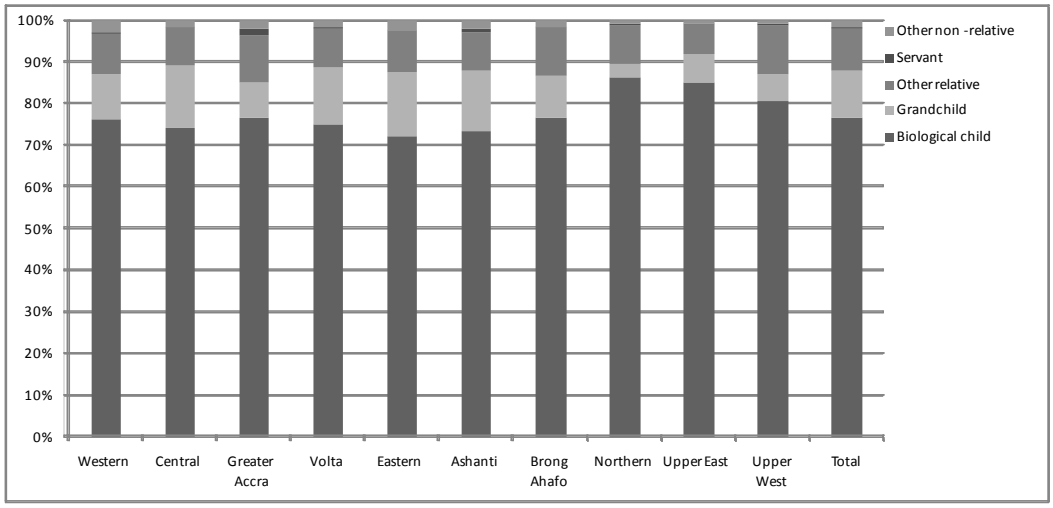
4. Results

This section provides context at the national and regional levels on the prevalence of fosterage and educational access of fostered children, using analysis of national data. It also employs district level survey data from a survey conducted by CREATE (the ComSS) in a more detailed analysis. ComSS data were collected at 13 schools in 7 communities within 4 educational circuits. The survey includes longitudinal monitoring at pupil level and a linked cross-sectional snapshot of the pupils' households. The sample is purposive in that it was intended to capture sites which may exemplify issues of access in the district and hence is not strictly representative. It does however cover both rural and urban districts along with all the major school types including secular District Assembly (DA) schools, aided religious schools and a low-cost private school. Section 4.3 reports the findings of interviews with education professionals on issues concerning fosterage and education and Section 4.4 reports findings from interviews with foster-carers at the household level.

4.1 Fosterage in GLSS (Ghana Living Standards Survey) Data

The fifth round of the Ghana Living Standards Survey, conducted in 2005/6, provides recent and nationally representative data at household level including information on school attendance for all sampled household members. Figure 3 below summarises the relationships of children to their household head by region in Ghana. Typically, around three quarters of children are the biological children of the head and 11% are grandchildren. The prevalence of fosterage may be estimated based on the proportion of other children in the household (excluding grandchildren since their parents may also live with the household head), which ranges from around 8 to 15%, averaging at and around 12% nationally and being around 11% in the Northern Region.

Figure 3: Relationships of Children aged 6-18 to the Household Head (2005/6)



Source: Computed from GLSS 5

Table 8 shows the ever-attendance at school rates in the 6-18 age-group for the Northern Region specifically, according to gender and relationship to the household head, excluding servants and other non-relatives where numbers are very small in the region. In this case, 45% of fostered girls and 57% of fostered boys had ever attended as compared to 51% and 62% of biological children and 61% and 80% of grandchildren respectively, indicating a discernible gap between fostered and non-fostered children's ever-enrolment.

Table 8: Ever-attendance rates of Children aged 6-18 in the Northern Region of Ghana by Relationship to the Household Head and by Gender

Relationship to head of household	Sex of individual		
	Female	**Male**	**Total**
Child	0.510	0.617	0.569
Grandchild	0.614	0.789	0.684
Other relative	0.450	0.566	0.506
Total	0.506	0.616	0.565

Source: Computed from GLSS 5

Table 9 compares key characteristics of fostered with non-fostered (biological children and grandchildren of the household head) children in the Northern Region (columns 1 and 2). Fewer fostered children had ever attended school or were currently attending at the time of the survey and the difference between ever and current attendance rates – indicating the prevalence of drop-out was twice as high for fostered children – a gap of 8 compared to 4 percentage points. Perhaps surprisingly, fostered children lived on average in slightly smaller households with higher levels of welfare in terms of per capita consumption spending. Although on average their parents had received less schooling and fostered children worked more hours than non-fostered children, these differences were not significant. Expenditure on schooling for both types of children was similar.

Columns 4 and 5 separate non-fostered children into those living in homes which contained a foster child (termed 'foster households') and those living in homes which did not. The findings here show that differences between fostered children and non-fostered children living in non-foster homes are fairly small. However, non-foster children living in foster homes showed considerably higher ever and current attendance rates at school and higher levels of parental education; and also received higher levels of schooling expenditure. In fact schooling expenditure and parental education was found to be approximately twice that of non-foster children in non-foster homes. Columns 6 and 7 compare foster and non-foster households, showing that welfare and the level of education of the household head is lower in non-foster homes, as is household size and the number of school-age children.

Table 9: Characteristics of fostered/non-fostered children aged 6-18 and foster/non-foster households in the Northern Region of Ghana (2005/6)

	Non-Fostered Child(1)	Fostered Child (2)	t-test sig at 5% (3)	Non-Fostered Child in Foster HH (4)	Non-Foster HH (5)
Child level					
Ever attended school	0.59	0.53	Yes	0.72	0.57
Currently attending school	0.55	0.45	Yes	0.66	0.53
Mother's education (yrs)	0.70	0.44	No	1.38	0.60
Father's education (yrs)	1.36	0.97	No	2.44	1.20
Hours worked (per week)	9.90	10.82	No	8.39	10.11
Household welfare[6] (1999 Cedis)	702,929	871,048	Yes	706,733	702,390
Household size	8.73	7.66	Yes	11.25	8.37
Schooling expenses (1999 Cedis)	218,724	198,164	No	307,281	164,447
Household level	**Non-Foster HH (6)**		**Foster HH (7)**		
Household welfare (1999 Cedis)	825,473		967,554		
Household head education (yrs)	1.71		2.62		
Household size	6.73		7.23		
School-age children	2.67		3.17		

N=1500
Source: Computed from GLSS 5

Table 10 shows the results of a probability analysis for the exploration of factors associated with ever-attendance at school for household members in the 6-19 age group reported by region. Variables are included for household composition factors, region, parents' education and household head's occupational sector. The association with male gender is much larger in the Northern region than elsewhere. The correlations with household level factors including welfare, socio-economic status (household head's employment sector), and the household head's gender are greater in the Northern region, as is the association with parental education. When examining the association between a child's relationship to the household head, the status of 'biological child of the household head' is used as the reference category. Fostered children mostly fall into the category 'other relative of head'. In the presence of the full set of variables, when compared to a biological child, a foster child's probability of ever attending school is lower at the 90% confidence level in four regions – Northern, Upper East, Brong Ahafo and Ashanti. In the Northern Region, being fostered is associated with a 19% lower probability of ever having attended school other things being equal, second only to a 20% difference in the Ashanti region. Because variables are included for household welfare, size, proportions of young children in the household, socio-economic group, region, urban location and sex of the household head, the fostering co-efficients may be interpreted as net of the effects of these factors, while it should not be interpreted necessarily as a causal effect since fosterage is also associated with a range of unobserved cultural and economic factors.

The association between ever-attendance and fosterage is notably larger than the association with being male when compared to being female in the Northern Region, the region which nonetheless has the highest levels of gender gap in educational access in Ghana. More specifically, being fostered is associated with a reduced probability of ever attending school

[6] Annual household per capita (equivalent adults) expenditure at Accra prices

by more than twice as much as the effect of being female (as opposed to male). When the exercise was run separately for the sample of boys and girls in the Northern Region, the fostering co-efficient was found to -0.238 for boys and -0.152 for girls. This suggests that while boys are otherwise more likely to attend, the apparent role of fostering is greater for boys than for girls to the extent that these associations are counterbalancing; and fostered girls and boys have almost equal likelihoods of attending, other things equal. This appears to suggest that the influence of other factors than fostering is greater in the case of the ever-attendance of girls. Indeed the separate estimates for boys and girls also indicated significant effects of socio-economic groupings for girls only; and larger effects of parental education in the case of girls than of boys.

In order to examine the difference in odds of ever attending school between fostered and non-fostered children within the same household, a household fixed effects logistic regression model was used with the sample of households which contained more than one child and in which there was variation among the children on ever-attendance – 730 households out of 5,147. Taking account of sex and age only, the odds of ever attending school for fostered children were found to be 29% of those of non-fostered children (significant at the 1% level). While this is clearly a highly selective sample, the finding indicates that in households where at least one child was not attending school, fostered children were considerably more likely to be not attending than non-fostered children and that this was not due to factors common to the children at household or community level.

Table 10: Probit for ever attendance at school: Marginal effects

	Northern Region	Western Region	Central Region	Greater Accra Region	Volta Region	Eastern Region	Ashanti Region	Brong Ahafo Region	Upper East Region	Upper West Region
Age in years	0.058	0.017	0.016	0.006	0.088	0.043	0.019	0.056	0.073	0.048
	(2.02)**	(2.99)***	(2.17)**	(1.37)	(4.63)***	(2.80)***	(2.67)***	(4.98)***	(2.73)***	(1.57)
Square of age	-0.003	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	-0.003	-0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.003	-0.002
	(-2.21)**	(-3.20)***	(-2.22)**	(-1.30)	(-4.61)***	(-2.50)**	(-3.02)***	(-5.14)***	(-2.60)***	(-1.72)*
Male	0.072	0.018	0.007	0.004	0.010	-0.007	0.006	0.013	-0.017	-0.031
	(2.38)**	(1.64)	(0.97)	(1.15)	(0.42)	(-0.37)	(0.66)	(0.85)	(-0.76)	(-1.11)
Grandchild of head	-0.025	-0.045	0.002	-0.004	-0.126	-0.013	-0.002	0.051	0.105	0.025
	(-0.24)	(-1.12)	(0.28)	(-0.38)	(-0.97)	(-0.31)	(-0.10)	(2.81)***	(1.24)	(0.42)
Other relative of head	***-0.186***	***-0.053***	***-0.094***	***-0.010***	***-0.001***	***-0.041***	***-0.201***	***-0.072***	***-0.183***	***-0.048***
	(-3.21)***	***(-1.24)***	***(-1.43)***	***(-0.75)***	***(-0.02)***	***(-0.99)***	***(-3.05)******	***(-1.74)****	***(-2.49)****	***(-0.88)***
Primary Ed Mother	0.289	0.022	0.011	0.005	0.083	0.038	0.022	0.023	0.148	-0.122
	(3.51)***	(2.36)**	(1.57)	(1.04)	(3.03)***	(2.44)**	(2.45)**	(0.92)	(1.32)	(-0.59)
Primary Ed Father	0.248	0.033	0.009	0.001	0.125	-0.014	0.005	0.049	0.141	0.125
	(3.21)***	(3.09)***	(1.49)	(0.29)	(4.25)***	(-0.67)	(0.38)	(3.25)***	(1.66)*	(1.73)*
Public sector emp.	0.336	-0.020	-0.040	0.005	-	-0.023	-0.010	0.018	0.175	0.190
	(4.34)***	(-0.56)	(-0.83)	(1.03)	-	(-0.37)	(-0.38)	(0.41)	(1.15)	(1.97)**
Non-farm self-emp.	0.180	0.021	0.005	-0.006	-0.062	0.059	0.035	-0.040	0.095	0.027
	(3.68)***	(2.56)**	(0.66)	(-0.90)	(-1.45)	(3.29)***	(2.91)***	(-1.25)	(1.20)	(0.43)
Sex –head (female)	-0.173	-0.001	-0.004	-0.005	-0.069	0.016	-0.016	-0.028	-0.124	-0.158
	(-2.15)**	(-0.05)	(-0.75)	(-1.26)	(-1.53)	(0.71)	(-1.44)	(-1.30)	(-1.60)	(-2.27)**
Household welfare (log)	0.149	0.014	0.006	0.005	0.065	-0.006	-0.020	0.062	0.104	0.086
	(3.46)***	(1.29)	(0.90)	(1.16)	(1.01)	(-0.30)	(-1.89)*	(2.33)**	(2.27)**	(2.57)**
Urban	0.076	-0.013	0.017	0.034	0.007	0.063	0.030	0.009	0.230	0.082
	(1.04)	(-0.79)	(1.74)*	(1.47)	(0.13)	(3.75)***	(2.34)**	(0.26)	(3.65)***	(1.69)*
Observations	1602	1170	836	816	949	1182	2237	1147	1200	1289
pseudo R-squared	0.126	0.296	0.227	0.352	0.232	0.172	0.167	0.234	0.111	0.0869

Robust z-statistics in parentheses(community fixed effects). *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

4.2 Fosterage in CREATE's Community and Schools Survey (ComSS) Data

For a number of reasons, fosterage is not always straightforward to identify at household level in Dagbon. An important reason is that close kinship bonds are valued highly so that a child may be described as a son or daughter where the relationship is not strictly biological. Oppong explains:

> Children are generally related by ties of kinship or marriage to the head of the household in which they live and should a friend's son come temporarily to live in the house to be trained, his relationship to the head will still be expressed in the kinship idiom. (Oppong, 1977:11)

Despite this, the prevalence of fosterage in the ComSS data is clearly high, even by comparison with the Northern Region more generally. Figures are reported in Table 11 below. Out of a total of 2,872 children in the district aged 6 to 17, 537 or 18.7% were fostered; 15.9% of boys and 22.5% of girls. The figure for girls is not dissimilar to Abukari's (2008) finding of 26% for girls when grandparents were excluded, although neither study used a representative sample. These figures are almost double those found for the Northern Region generally in GLSS 5.

Table 11: Prevalence of Fosterage in ComSS Data (2007/8) aged 6-17 all household

Relationship to Primary Care Giver	Female Child	Male Child	Total
Biological Child or Grandchild	942	1,393	2,335
	40.3%	59.7%	100.0%
Fostered Child	273	264	537
	50.1%	49.2%	100.0%
Total	1,215	1,657	2,872
	42.3%	57.7%	100.0%

Source: Author's calculations from ComSS

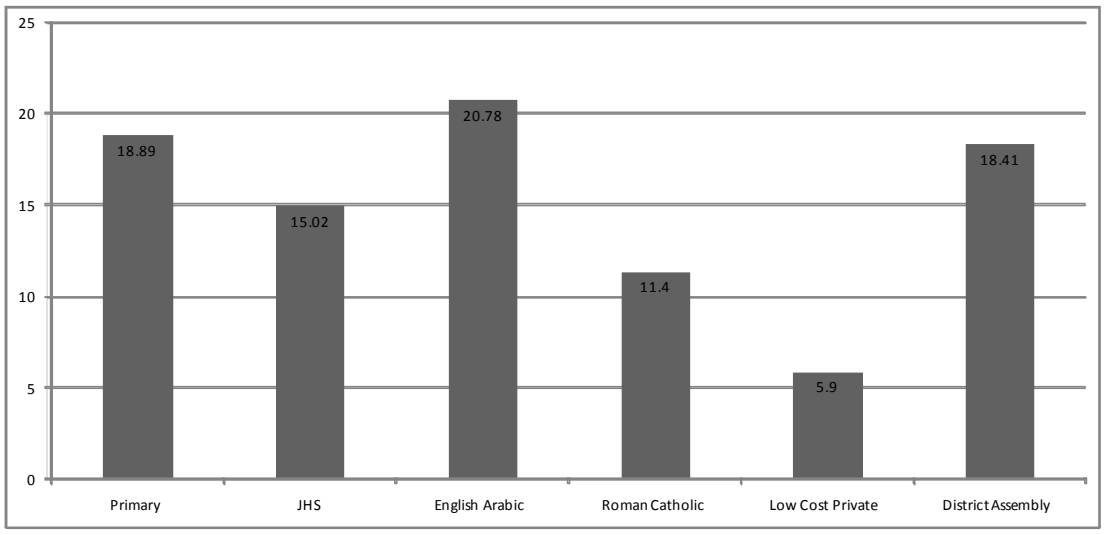
Table 12 below reports the numbers of fostered children by school in the ComSS data, also illustrated in Figure 4 by school type. It shows that at primary level, fostered children (excluding grandchildren) accounted for between around 9 and 33% of all children, with the lowest proportion being in the low-cost private school; the only private school in the sample, followed by the Roman Catholic schools. The highest proportions were in the English-Arabic primaries followed by the rural DA schools, consistent with Abukari's (2008) findings. At JHS level, fosterage was typically less common, ranging from around 9 to 25%, being highest in the remotest rural DA schools D and F. Since a sizeable portion of pupils in the district do not progress from primary school to JHS, these figures may be considered tentatively to point towards a selection effect in that fostered pupils may be less likely to progress. Clearly the data are cross-sectional and the primary and JHS populations represent different cohorts but other things being equal and based on an expectation of a declining prevalence of fosterage (see Section 4.3), once might expect higher proportions at JHS in the absence of drop-out. However, the number of observations is relatively small. Nonetheless, it is notable that in the English-Arabic schools, the proportion of fostered children at JHS is around half or less of that in the associated primary school. This pattern does not hold in the Roman Catholic or in the rural DA schools except DA school B.

Table 12: Numbers and Percentages of Fostered Children in ComSS (2007/8) all ages tracked in household data

School	Type	Location	Biological Child or Grand-child		Foster Child		Total
			n	%	n	%	N
English-Arabic C	Public (Primary)	Peri-Urban	160	75.5	52	24.5	212
English-Arabic D	Public (JHS)	Peri-Urban	31	91.2	3	8.8	34
Roman Catholic A	Public (Primary)	Peri-Urban	73	89.0	9	11.0	82
Roman Catholic B	Public (JHS)	Peri-Urban	15	88.2	2	11.8	17
Low cost private	Private(Primary)	Peri-Urban	32	94.1	2	5.9	34
English-Arabic A	Public (Primary)	Peri-Urban	58	67.4	28	32.6	86
English-Arabic B	Public (JHS)	Peri-Urban	24	82.8	5	17.2	29
District Assembly A	Public (Primary)	Rural	31	77.5	9	22.5	40
District Assembly B	Public (JHS)	Rural	10	90.9	1	9.09	11
District Assembly C	Public (Primary)	Rural	85	79.4	22	20.6	107
District Assembly D	Public (JHS)	Rural	27	81.8	6	18.2	33
District Assembly E	Public (Primary)	Rural	73	84.9	13	15.1	86
District Assembly F	Public (JHS)	Rural	24	75.0	8	25.0	32
Total			**643**		**160**		**803**
			80.1		**19.9**		**100.0**

Source: Author's calculations from ComSS

Figure 4: Percentages of fostered children attending by school type



Note – sample sizes vary between school types.

Table 13 below reports the values of important educational and background indicators for fostered and non-fostered children (columns 1 and 2). Attendance rates are almost identical. Pupils are typically considerably overage for their grades. Fostered boys tended to be more over-age, by an average of 0.82 years when compared to non-fostered boys. However, little difference was found in relation to ages at entry indicating that over-age enrolment is likely to be due to age-grade slippage. In terms of household assets and caregiver education and literacy, fostered children's households were found to be slightly more advantaged. At the household level, the mean caregiver literacy score in foster households was 6.34 (out of 40) compared to 3.68 in non-foster households and the household asset scores[7] were 0.52 and

[7] Based on a principal components analysis of portable household assets

0.08 respectively. Fostered children, however, had on average attended pre-school for a shorter time. No notable differences were found in relation to health and nutrition indicators, distances travelled to school or hours worked, although fostered children were found on average to live slightly further from a water source, indicating rural habitation. In relation to drop-out, rates were similar for non-fostered boys and girls and for fostered boys, but were notably higher for fostered girls at around 25%. Fostered children scored less in maths and English achievement tests on average, with the difference being marked in English, amounting to a ten percentage point gap. Achievement differences were similar for boys and girls.

Columns 4 and 5 compare non-fostered children living in foster households with those living in non-foster households. It was also notable that of the 2,872 children, 1,484 or 51.7% lived in foster households (in which there was at least one foster child). These households contained an average of 5.0 children (2.5 of whom were fostered) compared to 3.8 children in non-foster households. Although advantaged by living in households with fewer children, those in non-foster households appeared to be more disadvantaged in terms of a number of individual-level factors including drop-out and over-age status, but not in terms of achievement or schooling expenditure. Notably, non-fostered girls in foster households had low drop-out rates (6%) compared to their fostered counterparts (25%). The findings are consistent with those from GLSS data for the Northern region more generally in terms of the indications of higher asset levels, caregiver literacy and household size in foster households.

Table 13: Children's Education and Background Indicators by Fosterage Status (ComSS Tracked Sample aged 6-18)

Indicator	Fostered (1)	Not fostered (2)	t-test significant at 5% (3)	Non-Fostered child in: Foster (4)	Non-Foster HH (5)
Household portable asset score[8]	0.70	0.24	Yes	0.46	0.13
Drop-out (boys) (%)	0.16	0.15	No	0.11	0.17
Drop-out (girls) (%)	0.25	0.15	Yes	0.06	0.19
Pre-schooling (years)	1.67	2.07	Yes	2.03	2.10
Age at entry	7.25	7.26	No	7.20	7.30
Attendance (2007-8)(%)	79.39	81.16	No	82.51	80.46
Years overage (boys)	4.98	4.16	Yes	3.98	4.25
Years overage (girls)	3.89	3.85	No	3.53	4.02
Stunting z-score	-1.48	-1.33	No	-1.02	-1.49
BMI z-score	0.05	0.03	No	0.01	0.05
Caregiver literacy score (maximum 40)	6.48	4.58	No	6.92	3.39
Achievement in English (2007-8) Girls %	29.11	39.75	Yes	41.05	39.14
Achievement in English (2007-8) Boys %	33.39	43.32	Yes	39.00	45.68
Achievement in Maths (2007-8) Girls %	37.96	43.19	No	44.64	42.48
Achievement in Maths (2007-8) Boys %	37.37	41.19	No	40.67	41.46
Distance to school (km)	1.72	1.72	No	1.46	1.80
Distance to water source (km)	3.12	2.87	Yes	2.92	2.84
Work (boys) (hours/day)	1.43	1.96	No	1.75	2.09
Household chores (girls) (hours/day)	1.72	1.59	No	1.63	1.57
Schooling Expenditure Boys	426,690	397,413	No	356,979	417,958
Schooling Expenditure Girls	351,972	388,383	No	361,951	402,967

Source: Author's calculations from ComSS

[8] Calculated using principal components analysis using the entire ComSS dataset.

It is important to note, however, that fosterage is correlated with other important determinants of achievement and drop-out including over-age status and pre-schooling. Further, fostered children are concentrated in particular schools and these were often schools or school-communities with lower average attainment scores and higher drop-out rates. When analysis was conducted at school-level, significant differences between fostered and non-fostered children's drop-out, pre-schooling, overage status and achievement were found in a very small number of schools, although samples were small, and not in a general model using school 'fixed effects' with variables for pupil backgrounds. However, when school fixed effects models were employed; significant negative associations were found between fosterage and the duration of pre-schooling and between fosterage and achievement in English. Results are reported in Table 14. Fosterage was found to be associated with a score around 6 percentage points lower than non-fostered children in English and with around a quarter of a year less in terms of pre-school attendance.

Table 14: Regression results: English test and pre-schooling (school-fixed effects)

	Outcome:	Outcome:
	English Test Score 2007/8	Years of Pre-Schooling
Sex	5.852	0.038
	(1.96)*	(0.44)
Age	4.607	-0.084
	(2.46)**	(-6.54)***
Years overage for grade	-4.657	-
	(-2.19)**	-
Absence from school (log proportion)	-3.376	-
	(-1.89)*	-
Fostered	-6.047	-0.270
	(-1.72)*	(-2.67)***
Receives private tuition	3.028	-
	(1.68)*	-
Caregiver literacy score	0.301	0.002
	(2.74)***	(0.70)
Constant	-22.826	3.076
	(-1.27)	(16.96)***
Observations	258	800
R-squared	0.14	0.06
Number of schools	12	13

t-statistics in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Source: estimated using ComSS data

4.3 Educational Professional Interviews

Interviews with basic education professionals comprising 13 head teachers and deputy head teachers, 4 district education officers (DEOs), a Dagbon tribal chief and the deputy district director of education were conducted in March 2010 on a range of more general issues around educational access and the economic benefits of education. This section reports the findings of these interviews in relation to the issue of fosterage; a topic which arouse frequently in discussions of community and cultural issues of educational access. The discussions of reasons for and functions of fosterage, focusing on those relating to education directly and more indirectly through child labour and the household economy, were coded and are organised here in accordance with the reasons and functions identified in the literature review. In addition, more general comments on the practice of fosterage are reported in the following section. Illustrative comments made at interview are reported.

4.3.1 Prevalence, Patterns and Trends in Fosterage

In accordance with findings from secondary data, respondents typically indicated that fostering is common in Savelugu-Nanton. They also indicated a higher prevalence of fosterage among girls. For example:

> They send more boys to school than girls, for the girls they do give them to other relatives, fostering is very common here especially for the girls.

Several respondents indicated that fostering has been declining in the district over time. Reasons cited included increased awareness of the disadvantages of fosterage, including in relation to the treatment of fostered children:

> In Savelugu here it is reducing because especially the women, they see how foster children are treated so even if they have to give the child to the sister the woman will resist.

But also in relation to children's increasing resistance to fosterage:

> And most of the children are becoming stubborn. When they go to their aunties and they teach them, they go back to their parents or get sent back.

They also emphasised shifting attitudes towards schooling, consistent with the recent dramatic rise in enrolment. An increased appetite for schooling was associated with a shift away from fosterage:

> Even in [Community D - a remote rural community] it's reducing because of the disadvantages and more to the point, now everyone wants their child to be in school and for that you do not give your child for fostering.

In more detail, one interviewee explained that perceptions among both men and women are changing and that foster parents may be less inclined to host children who do not attend school:

> You can see that some of the sisters are declining to take the girls, because she is living with the husband who will not permit a girl in their home who will not go to school. Now the sister too has even developed to the extent that if you have a girl in your home and don't send her to school then people will think you are wicked and not treating the child fairly. And they know that if they have a child and want to send it to school they will leave the children with their brothers as it is a big responsibility.

Another interviewee referred to 'global awareness' as a reason for the decline, a factor which may be a significant development in the period since the work of Oppong and others in the 1970s:

> Now it's declining, because of education and global awareness of parent care for their children because most parents know now it is better for them to look after their own children.

Since that early work, communications have improved dramatically in Dagbon encouraging greater awareness of lifestyles and values outside the region. It appears that concern about access to education may be encouraging reconsideration of the impact of fosterage on children's welfare and prospects. Nonetheless, most fostered children do attend school and indeed not all forms of fosterage are antithetical to schooling nor indeed disadvantageous in

other ways. In the examples cited, reference appears to be primarily to the fosterage of girls where a major reason for fosterage is the provision of domestic labour to the girl's aunt.

Another reason for the decline in fostering was given in Community E, a community with a sizeable community of Christian converts from Islam. While the practice of fosterage is not itself an Islamic tradition, traditional Dagbon culture is closely intertwined with Islamic belief and Dagomba unions are typically polygamous. The respondent suggests plausibly that Christian belief and the associated practice of monogamy may be behind a decline in fosterage in the community.

> Yes it's reducing. Most people now are just in the nuclear family and it's mainly a Christian community who take only one wife.

It was noted by two respondents that the decline is particularly evident where boys are concerned, although the reasoning behind this was not made clear:

> For the boys it is declining but for the girls it is maintaining but we have been trying to educate because we can't actually stop it.

One explanation may be the decline in traditional occupations requiring training provided through fosterage.

4.3.2 Reasons For and Functions of Fosterage

Kinship and Solidarity

Several respondents explained that a primary purpose of fostering in Dagbon remains the strengthening of unity within the extended family. For example:

> When I question them they mainly say to bring the family together. Hmmm, for example, this is my brother, I'll give my son to him and I'll take another brother's son so we are united and we love each other.

Mention was also made, by way of the concept of 'homage' in the comment below, of the custom of betrothal of a man's wife to his sister and the association with fosterage of that woman's daughter:

> Yes it was kind of a homage they give to their sisters (the men) so even sometimes when they give birth to a girl they want their sisters to name the child and take the child and take care of it, it's a sort of prestige that 'oh, my daughter is with her auntie' and the auntie can see that she has got her brother's daughter staying with her.

Another comment emphasised family solidarity but also pointed to the transfer of responsible guardianship, indicating that traditionally at least, foster-parents take over decision-making in regard to the foster child:

> If you give your daughter to a brother, you cannot teach the brother, 'I want this', whatever the brother or sister decides to do, you sit down and watch. In those days if a child runs to you, you have to send the child back, to go because you don't want the family to break.

However, the motivations for fostering may be intertwined and evolving. One education professional explained that:

> They say when they do it, it strengthens the unity in their family. So your brother will take care of your child and the family will be more unified. That was the original reason but now it's not like that as there are some who uses the fostered child to do domestic work, work on the farm or babysitting.

Another indicated that depending on the balance of family circumstances, while the main reason for fosterage may be family bonding, the direction of fosterage may be determined by economics:

> It is just to create a family bond, so sometimes they will exchange and other times it is one way and it is based on the economic situation.

The literature indicates a simultaneous multiplicity of reasons for fosterage in traditional Dagbon so that it may be difficult to support the view that domestic labour is a 'new' motivation replacing family solidarity. However, the balance of motivations and reasons for fosterage will clearly depend upon prevailing conditions and context. Where fosterage as described above is "one way and based on the economic situation" there may be some relief of hardship to the family 'fostering out' and possibly some benefit to the fostered child of moving to a family in a better economic situation, depending on how that child is treated. Indeed, the effect, including in terms of access to education, may depend both on the motivations and circumstances of the donor and recipient family.

Responsible Parenting and Education

The role of fostering in ensuring a 'good upbringing' was cited by a number of respondents, who pointed to the potential benefits of fosterage in terms of learning discipline and humility. For example,

> The child is morally trained. You see when a child is living with a different person, the child is sometimes more committed to that person, anything that person says the child will take it more in comparison than with their own father or mother, the biological parents.

They also referred, in the case of girls, of the benefits of fosterage in learning domestic skills and in preparing for marriage:

> We have the tradition that says that once a woman brings up her own daughter the turns out to be lazy the mother does not want to teach her daughter almost everything that the girl needs to learn because there'd be some kind of fatigue, you see? So if you foster a girl to your sister, the auntie will teach her how to become a proper woman...if a woman or a girl was brought up by her biological mother most young men would not want to marry her, they'd find she was unbred, she was lazy and she would not become a good housewife.

These comments are partly at variance, however, with the views expressed concerning possible growing resistance to fostering and 'stubbornness' among fostered children. The conflict was illuminated by one interviewee who opposed the view that fosterage promotes discipline, arguing that the disadvantages fostered children experience may prompt them to leave home for *kayaye* in the South, where it becomes impossible to 'control' them. The issues of resistance and stubbornness among fostered children emerge more clearly in the household interviews discussed below.

> some people, immediately they bring those children, they will not allow them to go to school, they will put them in the house, then when a child will grow up at some stage they start maybe following bad friends or something, then all of a sudden the child will pack and go down South for *kayaye*. So where does the discipline come in here? The child is not with you, how do you control the child?

The educational professionals interviewed did not mention as a reason for fosterage the improvement of a child's educational opportunities, except in one case where the interviewee suggested that in the past fosterage had served this purpose, but no longer:

> It used to be advantageous because your parents may not have [the resources] but because of someone fostering would cater for you and you will be educated. But this time no it's not like that.

As considered below, the views they expressed concerning the relationships between fosterage and education tended to be negative and focused on the impact of foster children's work and status in the family on their education.

Child labour and Indigenous Education

The role played by fostered children, especially girls, in domestic and care work has already been mentioned and was discussed by several interviewees. Two interviewees referred specifically to the greater ability of a woman to direct the work of foster children from her own side of the family when compared to her own biological children owing to their more indirect relationship with her husband. While all Dagomba girls are involved in domestic work, this point suggests a potentially greater burden for fostered girls:

> She sees her as her own child and since she is seeing her as her own child she takes up all her household chores and other things that she the woman would have wanted to do or would have be forced to do these girls would have picked them up, she goes to harvest and brings them to the woman, she brings the firewood, the fresh water and so many things that the auntie would have been doing that the auntie's biological children wouldn't even do."

While the foster child's duties are clearly often a part of the arrangement, one appeared to consider them the main reason:

> Mostly if it is the mother's side, they demand to take the girls. Your sister would like to take the girl to take care of them. But we know that it is only to reduce the burden in the house.

Another saw the duties themselves as serving the end of family solidarity, indicative of Goody's 'reciprocities of rearing' (Goody, 1973):

> Caring for older relatives as well, the grandmother, you give your daughter to the grandmother to look after. The girl does things for the woman and takes good care of her. So it was family binding.

Another suggested that the role in strengthening family solidarity was no longer important and pointed to the negative effects of foster children's work:

> It is very common and at parents evenings I tell them a lot that they should try and discourage that tradition because it is useless. It was supposed to provide a family tie

> but not anymore. When the children are supposed to be in class, the fostered children will be asked to go to the market and bring back yams.

Interviewees rarely mentioned the indigenous Dagomba system of occupational training in connection with fosterage. In one case the interviewee explained the evolution of the relationship between education, training and fosterage, emphasising the positive role played in the past but adding that currently, fosterage is less beneficial educationally:

> It was very good for us because people learnt how to be disciplined, they learnt how to become proper and they learnt how to become good citizens. So it was a good education you see and the girls also learnt a whole lot of things and how to become responsible but it is the secular education that has come and made it a little bit problematic.

In another, mention occurred in regard to occupational training more generally:

> I will give my brother my son because he is a white shirt or knows a profession or trade and you want your son to learn it.

Managing economic shocks and crises

Economic hardship was cited as a motivation for fosterage by a number of interviewees. In two cases, 'economic shocks' leading to 'crisis fostering' were mentioned specifically in connection with parental mortality and with the tradition of custody along the paternal line of descent. For example:

> After my father's death, the last wife had four children and I had to take all of them away because the woman got married to a new man. She was a young woman and you who is the eldest son of the deceased is seen as foolish and irresponsible if you don't take your half sisters and brothers and if you allow their mother to carry them away.

More generally, one interviewee made the point that fosterage may favourably redistribute the burden of caring and providing for children, consistent with the fosterage of children by more economically advantaged households:

> Some of these parents have children but cannot take care of them themselves and their brother or sister is responsible and have more means to look after the children.

Effects of fostering including on education

Several comments were made in relation to differential treatment of foster children. Interviewees suggested foster parents may care for the children less well than their biological counterparts:

> There is also a problem with fostering because the aunties and uncles do not take care of the children properly like a biological parent would.

This was linked in two cases to the greater work responsibilities of foster children:

> They are disadvantaged because they are treated worse than the other children. The girls will have to do all the household chores and the boys will have to fetch the water.

Interviewees cited a number of issues of educational access and attainment for fostered children. Linked to the remarks above, the greater work commitments of fostered children were considered to impact negatively on their schooling. One attributed this to the expectation of foster parents:

> people look at it as they're coming to help but not to attend school.

While another attributed it rather to work commitments more directly:

> Yes especially with the girls as most of them are adopted and live with their aunties and the boys live with their uncles and grandparents and have to go to the farm during farming season. When it's farming season our attendance is normally low.

Specifically, the domestic responsibilities of fostered girls to their aunties were mentioned by several interviewees. For example,

> That one also prevents them from going so when a child is been given to their auntie, the auntie says this child is not supposed to be in school because she has been given to me to help with domestic chores not go to school.

Interviewees explained that the costs of education also impact on the foster parents' ability and willingness to send foster children to school, depending on the relationship between foster and biological parents, for example:

> They tell the biological parents what the child needs in the school and which they cannot afford and they beg them to come in and give their child assistance to help their child in the school.

Another comment suggested that the development of secular education in the district may have altered the calculus of costs and benefits of fosterage to the detriment of foster children whose guardians are unable or unwilling to provide for their education:

> … it was not a bad practice, what has now been bad is separate because if the aunt is poor she might be unwilling or unable to send them to school.

In relation to effects on children who had attended, one interviewee spoke of the effect of fosterage on drop-out:

> Sometimes they drop out at primary level, this is because the auntie will not let them go to school so they don't feel part of the school. They don't participate.

And two others linked the practice directly to poor performance, for example

> Sometimes a child comes to school but they are slipping and the school asks why are you coming in late and the child says 'oh I am not staying with my parents I am staying with my auntie or this and that and early in the morning before I come to school I have to do this, do this, do this or have to work late at night that's why I am always sleeping in school. So the school will know that the child is not actually with the parents but they don't have records for that.

4.4 Household Interviews

Following the interviews with education professionals, semi-structured interviews were conducted with foster carers at their households in May 2010. The interviews focused directly

on fosterage, centring on the reasons for and functions of fosterage and their relationships to educational access, which are again coded and reported according to those identified in the literature review. Results are also reported from questions which asked carers about other issues likely to impact on household decision-making with regard to children's schooling, including livelihoods, children's work and schooling as well as about the nature of foster relationships and trends in fostering in their communities. The selection of caregivers for interview was based on the results of the CREATE ComSS. Three rural communities were identified in which fosterage is common and from each of these six foster households were selected at random from the household list. Interviews were conducted in Dagbani in the presence of an English translator.

Results of the Background Questionnaire

Prior to interview, household caregivers completed a background questionnaire which collected data on the caregiver's age, gender and education and on the number, ages, school status and relationships to the caregiver for all children in the household. 10 of the 18 caregivers were male and 8 female. Their ages ranged from 30 to 75 with a mean of 56.4. 93 children under 18 were identified as living in the sampled households – 42 females and 51 males. Of 91 children for whom all responses were collected, 32 were biological children of the caregiver 41 were grandchildren and 18 (10 boys, 8 girls) or 20% fostered, a figure similar to the overall proportion in the ComSS data. Among the fostered children 17 were nieces or nephews of the caregiver and one was a child of the household caregiver's co-wife. 17 out of 18 caregivers were illiterate or had never attended school, while one had attended night school; indicating a very high prevalence of illiteracy in this rural sample. Households contained between 1 and 10 children with a mean of 4.9. 73 children were in the school-age (6-17) group. Caregivers reported that 10 children in this group were not attending school – 5 biological children, one grandchild and four fostered girls. Overall, the characteristics of the rural sample of foster families interviewed were consistent with traditional Dagbon social organisation indicated in the literature; with large household size and polygamous and extended family living arrangements reliant on subsistence agriculture.

4.4.1 Family Livelihoods and Children's Work

When asked about their main source of livelihood, almost all caregivers replied that they were farmers. In addition, a number engaged in agricultural labouring for others, petty trading and shea nut gathering and processing. One household was the dwelling of a *wanzam* family of traditional barbers and circumcisers.

In response to a question about whether they sometimes had difficulty meeting the family's basic needs, all caregivers said that they did; with some experiencing problems as serious as starvation. They mentioned poor farm yields, the seasonality of farming, crises (especially mortality and illness) and a low level of demand for their products. They referred to additional difficulties experienced during the rainy season; during which time families are unable to farm and rely on alternative sources of livelihood such as shea butter extraction. For example:

> Yes sometimes it is a problem meeting my basic family needs in the sense that there are certain times that there is no food, like in the rainy season, then what we depend on is the shea butter that I am doing, where we get a little money to take care of the family's needs.

And, more seriously:

> Yes there are problems with the basic needs. Sometimes you are told about a funeral and you don't have money to go so I have to borrow from a colleague or a friend. Sometimes even food to eat becomes a problem, especially when it comes to the rainy season we go to the market and if we don't have money we have to look for leaves to eat and we then boil them and use them as food.

Several commented specifically on the consequences of economic hardship for children's education, in particular the difficulty experienced in meeting costs. For example:

> The difficulties involved here is concerning poverty. I am not able to support my children very well to go to school because I am poor and with the costs involved I am the only person to take control of it. With the costs involved we normally go to look for shea nuts to make shea butter to raise money to take care of her education so sometimes the child goes to school, there's no money for her and she only comes back during break and then eats.

Another emphasises the seasonality of the difficulties:

> We are farmers and when it comes to the rainy season it is not very easy for us to support children to come to school.

While a third made clear the severity of the problem and of the trade-off sometimes faced in raising money for schooling. Poverty may even require a choice between adequate nutrition and meeting school costs; a serious issue in a district where under nutrition is very common (see Section 1.1):

> We face a lot of problems. Sometimes we sell the little food we have to buy the children's school needs and when we are faced with starvation we sell the few sheep and goats that we rear and that's how we continue to exist.

When asked about their children's work, 11 out of 14 caregivers who commented explained that boys and girls typically do different kinds of work. Three others said boys' and girls' work is similar; while all those who answered said that the kinds of work done by fostered and biological children are the same. Boys' work was mostly described in terms of farming and occasionally petty trading, while girls' work was explained to be primarily domestic including fetching water, but also included trading and shea butter extraction as well as some aspects of farming such as sowing and harvesting. These findings largely accord with the literature on traditional children's work roles in Dagbon which was considered in Section 2.

4.4.2 Education

In relation to education access in terms of school availability and quality, the vast majority of caregivers gave positive responses, indicating that basic education is within reach in distance terms and that it is of adequate or good quality. Only one mentioned poor teaching, citing poor teacher motivation as the problem. One other said that for rural children the provision of bicycles is needed. Others explained that post-JHS provision is problematic. This is unsurprising since only basic schools are within travelling distance of the communities visited. Nevertheless, a lack of opportunity for progression may be expected to impact somewhat on enrolment, performance and progress at the basic level.

The overwhelming difficulty expressed by caregivers, as indicated already, concerned the costs of schooling; most often indirect costs. All caregivers replied that they experienced difficulties supporting their children's education. Eight commented on the difficulties in meeting the cost of uniforms, five the cost of books and materials, four school fees and levies and three explained the problem in relation to poverty more generally, for example:

> We experience a lot of difficulties in terms of financing, especially school uniform etc. As for the distance to school there is no problem because the school is not far from the house at all but we experience a lot of financial difficulties.

Two others commented on the issue of providing food for schoolchildren, for example:

> Basic education here is very easy, there is no problem accessing it at all. What I am concerned about is a child going to school on an empty stomach.

Concerning the relative importance of girls' and boys' schooling, eleven caregivers said that both should be prioritised equally, while one favoured boys' education and two favoured that of girls. In the case of the preference for boys, this was expressed in terms of the lower probability of girls' completion and the possibility of migration to *kayaye.*

> For me I think it is more important to send boys than girls because the boys take it more seriously and the girls when they go to school they often don't complete. Sometimes we cannot blame the teachers because we don't get complaints from the girls about the teachers and they misbehave in school and then before you realise they run away to *kayaye.*

However, another caregiver interpreted what may be the same the difficulty somewhat differently, indicating that because of the expectation of marriage, which may shorten girls' time in school, their education should be emphasised.

> Both boys and girls should be given equal education. Because of nature, girls do not have so much time – sometimes they are supposed to be at their marital homes at certain ages. For boys they can continue until they complete at the highest levels.

> It is important to educate girls more than boys – for in a very short time they will be at their marital homes. With some education it will help them fend for the family and that is why girls should be given more importance than boys.

Another expressed what appeared to be a similar view and a third agreed that girls' own attitudes to schooling may at times be a barrier to meaningful access.

> Yes I have seen girls' education to be more important than the boys. In my observation the girls don't like schooling so if you lay emphasis on them to go to school it is better. As for the boys, they don't care and will attend school no worries.

> The girls don't want to attend schools and when the teachers want to teach them the girls create a lot of problems and they come back to say the teachers are wicked.

While the reasons for gender disparities in educational access are clearly complex and embedded in Dagbon culture; the issue of marriage and its association with *kayaye* is evidently significant and yet more significant for fostered girls. The literature suggests that

the responsibility for marriage preparation is paramount among a foster-mother's duties while at the same time she may lack the necessary resources especially if her husband is unwilling to support children who are not biologically his and if help from a girl's biological parents is not forthcoming. The ComSS data shows that drop-out is high for fostered girls, especially when compared to non-fostered girls, but also when compared to both fostered and non-fostered boys, which may be considered to support this interpretation.

4.4.3 Family Structure and Fostering

Caregivers were asked about their family and household structure. 14 were found to be in polygamous unions and 4 in monogamous unions. Where the number of wives was mentioned it ranged from 2 to 5. They were asked if any of their own biological children were fostered to other relatives; 13 replied that they were while 5 had no children fostered by others. This suggests fosterage was a reciprocal arrangement in the majority of cases in this sample. The high prevalence of polygamy may be attributed to the fact that the sample is of households in rural Dagbon where traditional livelihoods dominate and where traditional culture may be subject to weaker external influence than in urban areas. Caregivers were asked about how they came to be foster parents and about the reasons for fosterage relationships.

Kinship and Solidarity

Kinship and solidarity reasons for fosterage were by cited most frequently by far and this accords with the comments made by education professionals who cited these as primary reasons. Several dimensions or interpretations of family bonding were explained to be enhanced through fosterage. Fosterage was often said to promote 'getting to know' members of the extended family. Where evaluative remarks were expressed in relation to fosterage (four cases), caregivers were positive about the tradition, considering it to be 'good' or 'important'. For example:

> In our Dagbon custom, fostering is very good and important because it promotes family relationships between the biological parents and you - the person who has taken the child and also it is good for the whole family.

Also, on a related reason, the suggestion that fosterage would promote visiting parts of the family who might otherwise be 'forgotten' was made four times. For example:

> The reason is that they do not want them to forget about the family relationship. As they grow old and even after death their children and the children of the parents of the foster child will live together and that bonding is there for both families – that is why fostering is important.

More specifically, because women typically move to the homes of their husbands, fostering was said in two cases to be valuable in serving to 'bridge the gap' between the woman's natal and her marital homes. For example:

> If a woman is married and gives birth – we give one of the kids to the father's home to bring the two families together – the boy was given to them to the father's home of his mother to bridge the gap so that the two families would know about each other.

Further, the Dagomba conception of children's belonging was expressed in relation to a wider kinship network, beyond that of their biological parents. This point may be considered an

expression of the 'claim' to foster children which may be exercised by relatives in the extended family.

> Yes I can explain, the children are my brother's children and according to tradition my children belong to my brothers and my brother's children belong to me.

The traditions of fosterage were also explained in terms of betrothal customs associated with pregnancy rites in four cases. These comments accorded with Abukari (2008) and others analyses considered in Section 2. For example:

> This is our tradition, your own children don't necessarily have to stay with you and you can go and bring some from your other families. Well, normally these are my brother's children and my brothers were married and I also looked after their wives and when the wives delivered the girls were given to me, it's a sort of family bonding.

In the cases where such accounts were given, the fostered children are girls. The tradition of fostering girls in this way was expressed more generally by one female caregiver and lies in part behind the higher prevalence of fostered girls when compared to boys.

> The reasons for fostering are about family bonding and we have the tradition that the child is for the man so if you give birth to a girl, the man will always want to give the child to his sister's to look after.

Responsible Parenting

The notion of 'responsible parenting' as a reason for fosterage appeared implicitly many times through foster parents comments about education and so on but appeared three times more explicitly. Foster parents explained that a 'proper upbringing' could be better provided through fosterage, firstly because of a lack of capacity on the part of biological parents, secondly because the biological parents lived in Kumasi where the respondent believed it may be more difficult to provide a 'proper upbringing' and thirdly where upbringing by foster parents may encourage a child to be 'more sensible':

> Even the chiefs, when they give birth to their children they try to send them out of their family so they will be more sensible than if they grew up within the family.

Schooling

Four foster parents commented directly that providing education was a part of the reasoning for the relationship of fostering. These comments illustrate the complexity and contingency of the implications of fosterage for educational access. Extended family networks may be engaged to support parents who may be unable to send children to school, for example:

> The children's father who is my son lives in Kumasi and when the child is delivered she sends them to me and I send them to school.

and

> The father came over here to do farming and when he came he saw the schooling here was very good so he decided to bring the girl to me to take care of.

While in other cases, fosterage may inhibit access. Providing for the foster child's education presented difficulties for some caregivers and it is less clear in these cases that schooling benefits were part of the fostering relationship. Several comments were made about the bearing of the cost-burden for fostered children's education. Among caregivers who commented on whether they received help from the biological parents of their foster children, four said they received some help, for example:

> There are no particular difficulties in the fostering relationship. Our only problem is poverty. When the girl needs something and I have money I will buy and when I don't have, I ask my brother her biological father to assist me, sometimes he does but sometimes he will say he has no money, in fact that is the only problem that we face.

Seven interviewees, however, explained that they received no help. These findings are not dissimilar to Abukari's finding in relation to fostered girls reported in Section 2.5. For example:

> To me it's very good. In the sense that if your brother loves you he can give his daughter for you to look after but sometimes it is bad because sometimes the biological parent doesn't care about the child again. In my case, the father doesn't care about the girl again. He's even telling me that if I would like to take the girl out of education I can. That a girl's education is not very important.

In these cases the burden appeared to lie with the foster parents. It is also clear that these foster parents felt unsupported by the biological parents in relation to the fostered children's schooling. In one case it was implied that the foster parent would benefit by taking care' of the foster child, indicating a reciprocal arrangement, perhaps by receiving domestic help.

> The child that is given to you has to be with you forever that is how they see it. The parents do not even want the child to invest in them. It is left to me to take proper care of such child or children so that I will also benefit from taking care of them.

In another a more equivocal point was expressed, indicating that a biological parent's help may depend upon the perception of need:

> Yes I am responsible for the education of the foster child but sometimes when the biological parents see you are not capable or there are poverty issues around they will help you but if they can see you are capable they will not.

Further, it is particularly notable that two foster parents stated that while they send their foster children to school, their own biological children, fostered to other relatives, are not attending. At least one of the parents appeared to lament this state of affairs, but was apparently not able to prevail upon the foster parent to send the children to school. For example:

> It is very important for both boys and girls to go school. But it is very unfortunate that all my children who are boys are not going to school. Only the girls attend school. The girls that are with me, the parents are not bothered. The parents do not even come to see how they are faring. They even told me that I could take them out of school if I wanted to.

These comments indicate that foster parents are in these cases the main decision making agent with regard to children's schooling and that schooling was not a motivation for the fostering arrangement. It might also be suggested, given the apparent discontent among these parents about their biological children's schooling, that they are unable to influence the foster parent and that the fostering arrangement may be more a matter of obligation than choice.

When asked about progress in school directly, all caregivers said they expected their fostered and biological children to reach the same level of education ultimately. When asked if they thought fosterage impacted on children's school work only one answered that it does.

> Yes sometimes it affects the foster child because the foster child has to do everything and when I see she's late for school I tell her to stop so that I will continue the work.

On the question of whether fosterage impacts on a child's progress in school, again only one answered that it does.

> Yes it does in a way because sometimes they do this work and they are not able to go to school on time and if they do the work they are tired and the teacher is teaching and they are not able to concentrate.

Children's Work

In only one case did a foster parent explain that a main reason for fosterage was the provision of domestic labour for the household. She commented:

> She came to me about four years ago because my auntie gave her to me to help me when I gave birth.

In six others, it was explained that a benefit or an advantage of the foster relationship was the additional labour in farm or domestic work provided by the foster child. For example:

> There are a lot of advantages. When they come back from school they help me on the farm. Sometimes I don't even need to tell them what I want them to do. They quickly get to know what I want them to do and they do it for me.

Indigenous Education

In only one case was a reason for fosterage given in terms of indigenous education or training. This caregiver was a *wanzam* who explained that a child had been fostered out by his biological father to learn the traditional skills of the *wanzam*. Notably, however, the foster parents had also enrolled the child in school, indicating an apparent accommodation between indigenous and public forms of education.

> The fostered child is with them because they have a senior brother who was not making it in life. He didn't know how to do work – we are traditionalists who barber and circumcise people – so he gave the child to his father who is no longer alive and now I am taking care of the child. The child is now able to barber people but is yet to learn how to circumcise people –we are teaching the child how to do this plus at the same time he is schooling at the community school. The child has been with us for past 15 years.

Crisis and Redistribution of Children

In three cases crisis in the form of mortality played a part in fosterage arrangements. In one case a grandmother was caring for her late daughter's children. In another a child who had been fostered to his grandfather was subsequently fostered by an uncle upon his grandfather's death. In a third case, fosterage followed the death of the caregiver's sister-in-law. In this case, schooling of the child appears to have been a benefit of fosterage.

> The arrangements are that their mother died and I asked the children's biological father if I could foster them and he agreed so I took them and put them into school.

In two more cases the arrangement was not a result of crisis but 'redistribution' so that childless women were given a child to take care of through fosterage. For example:

> That is my uncle's daughter, she was given to my own mother and my mother realised that I didn't have a child with me so she gave her to me to help me when my own children are delivered.

Caregivers also expressed views on the evolution of fosterage in Dagbon and on more general aspects of the fosterage relationship, which are considered below.

4.4.4 Foster Relationships

In the comments considered already, caregivers emphasised the need to take proper care of foster children. When asked if there were any differences between their relationships with foster and biological children, all caregivers said that there were not. Equally, when asked directly about the effects of being fostered on a child, almost all said there were no adverse effects. For example:

> There is no difference between them. Indeed a foster child we regard more. If there is an quarrel between the biological and fostered child we tend to support the foster child more because we don't want a situation where the child will feel that because their mother or father is not in the house they will be mistreated.

However, in response to a question about any difficulties experienced in fostering children, a number of caregivers explained they had difficulty in meeting the basic needs of foster children. This view had already been expressed in relation to meeting children's needs more generally, however.

> Yes there are difficulties experienced. Sometimes when you have a child with you sometimes you are not able to provide. You see them being lonely and pondering issues and if their father sees then it becomes a problem.

Two caregivers explained that sometimes a foster child may be affected by not living with his or her biological parents, in terms for example of behaviour and self-esteem. None explained these problems in terms of their own foster children explicitly. For example:

> Some difficulties may be experienced. When some foster children realise that they are not living with their biological parents, they tend to behave in awkward manner, but if this is not the case then they get on well with each other and then there will be no difficulties experienced.

Respondents often expressed the issues around the fostering relationship in terms of contingencies. In the case of the child's behaviour in response to fostering this was indicated to depend upon the child in three cases. For example:

> It depends on the child. Sometimes due to a childish mind the fostered child may think that because they are not your biological child that you are disturbing her but that is not the case.

In three other cases, the care given to the child was emphasised as an important driver of the effects of fosterage:

> Fostering will have effects on the child – dependent on how much care is given to the foster child. If given proper care, the affects will be positive – no problem. If not given good care the affects will be negative.

More specifically, four respondents explained that some foster parents treat foster children less well than their biological children, while none expressed this in terms of their own case. For example:

> Some foster children suffer in many respects – some people do not treat them well – they beat them and say they are not their true children. I am not such a one, I don't agree with such treatment.

4.4.5 Evolution of Fosterage

Three caregivers expressed a perception of decline in the prevalence of fosterage in Dagbon. Perceptions of unequal or poor treatment were cited as possible reasons for the trend. However, respondents themselves typically remained positive about the fosterage tradition, emphasising the benefits in terms of family bonding but also the need to treat foster children well. For example:

> I want to stress on the need to take proper care of them and I have heard some people comment that fostering will stop in the future. I think that it is a good thing [fosterage] because of the family bonding. Some take children as foster children and will not take proper care of them – which I think is not right.

5. Discussion

While most adults in the Savelugu-Nanton district remain illiterate, access to education for children, including foster children, has expanded considerably in recent years; and caregivers were typically found to value educational opportunities for their children. There is some suggestion in the data of 'culture shift' in favour of support for public schooling and away from traditional forms of education and training and perhaps also away from practicing fosterage. But the prevalence of fosterage remains high. Around one in ten children in the Northern region of Ghana are fostered, while data for Savelugu-Nanton suggest a figure closer to one in five. Both boys and girls are regularly fostered, but rates are higher for girls. An important part of the explanation for high rates of fosterage in Savelugu-Nanton consists in the traditions and culture of the Dagomba. This also applies to the higher rate for girls, since custom emphasises the fosterage of girls, particularly to their fathers' sisters. The main difficulty caregivers expressed in relation to educating their children, both fostered and biological, concerned the affordability of indirect costs of schooling, despite recent cost reduction initiatives. Nonetheless, educational disadvantage for fostered children in particular was apparent in all sources of data.

5.1 Fosterage and the CREATE 'zones of exclusion'

Returning to the CREATE conceptual model of 'zones of exclusion' outlined in Section 1, data analysis provides some specific evidence in relation to fostered children in the context of northern Ghana and Savelugu-Nanton. Concerning 'zone 0' – exclusion from access to pre-schooling; analysis showed that in the Savelugu-Nanton sample, fostered children received on average one third of a year less pre-schooling, which remained when taking account of their backgrounds. While the reasons for this and its effects were not addressed specifically, the relationships between early childhood education and later educational progress established in the literature provide reason to expect that this early disadvantage may contribute to later inequities between fostered and non-fostered children, including in terms of their exclusion outcomes. Fostered children in the Northern Region generally were also found to be excluded in 'zone 1' (never enrolling in primary school) more often, being 19% less likely to ever enrol and even less likely to enrol when compared to biological children living in the same household (where there was intra-household variation).

Fostered children in the region were found to have drop-out rates at basic school level twice as high as the non-fostered in the 6-18 age-group (exclusion zones 2, 4 and 5) and indications from national-level analysis are that fostered children typically progress considerably less often to primary and junior high school completion. In Savelugu-Nanton district, ComSS data indicate that drop-out among fostered girls is particularly high and that fostered children appear to make the transition to junior high school less frequently. With regard to 'silent exclusion' (zones 3 and 6) in the forms of poor attendance and achievement which reduce 'meaningful access' to education, analysis of ComSS data did not find a difference between fostered and non-fostered children's attendance, but did find that fostered children attained less, particularly in English, including when taking account of their backgrounds and the schools they attended.

5.2 Reasons for Fosterage and Their Impact on Educational Access

Many of the reasons given for fosterage in interviews were very similar to those cited by scholars in the 1970s. The high cultural value placed on the role of fosterage in promoting kinship solidarity was emphasised both by education professionals and caregivers and is

considered the dominant explanation for fosterage practices. Other cultural beliefs were also considered important by both sets of interviewees in motivating the fostering of children, including the benefits of fosterage in terms of 'responsible parenting', while reasons associated with indigenous education traditions were rarely mentioned. 'Crisis fostering' was found to be practiced as well as fostering specifically to improve education opportunities, for the purposes of providing domestic help and for economic reasons. It is clear that in some circumstances fosterage enhanced children's educational opportunities. Although not a dominant reason for fostering, in a number of cases which emerged in household interviews, children were fostered either with the explicit intention of facilitating schooling or with the added benefit of better schooling; including where the reason for fosterage was crisis or mortality in the natal home.

'Perception gaps' were discernible between the responses of education professionals and caregivers in relation to both the reasons for fosterage and to their effects. Education professionals drew attention to the benefits to foster carers in terms of foster girls' work and to the consequent disadvantages regarding schooling, while caregivers emphasised the positive aspects of fostering, including the educational opportunities afforded to some foster children. Education professionals occasionally appeared to see kinship reasons for fosterage as a pretext for fostering for reasons of child labour. Both, however, agreed that in some households, foster children are sometimes treated less well than their biological counterparts, including being expected to work more, although the working hours reported for foster children in school were apparently not prohibitive with regard to schooling and indeed the attendance of foster children in school did not differ from the non-fostered. In the cases of fostered children who are out of school, however, work responsibilities may be greater and interviewees suggested this is the case, particularly for some girls, whose duties were mainly domestic or in petty-trading. The work of foster boys may be less in demand owing to a decline in traditional occupations. Nonetheless, work and periods away from school associated with seasonal agriculture may be part of the explanation for the higher levels of age-grade slippage among fostered boys.

Part of the reason for greater work commitments is found to consist in the 'reciprocity' aspect of the fostering relationship, which means that foster children may be under greater pressure to 'earn their keep'(see Goody, 1973), consistent with the expectation of foster parents that the fostering relationship would be of benefit to their households. Since the benefits of child work did not emerge, however, as a primary reason for entering into foster arrangements, it is argued that children's work is better understood as a consequence than as a cause fostering in the context of Savelugu-Nanton.

The requirements of 'preparation for marriage' are found indirectly to impose potentially greater work requirements on fostered girls. Raising the necessary funds for marriage is typically a requirement of the foster home, consistent with the custom that foster families assume the responsibilities of guardianship of foster children. But where resources are lacking or where foster parents may be unwilling to offer support, girls are sometimes found to avail themselves of the opportunities of *kayaye*. In interviews, many caregivers were aware of girls working in *kayaye* for this purpose. In addition to the potential to earn money for marriage items; financial and other forms of independence were suggested to be particularly attractive where girls experienced hard working lives, lack of access to schooling and/or mistreatment in the foster home. Evidence of high levels of early drop-out among fostered girls in the data, but also smaller numbers of girls in the household sample, are consistent with and may be consequences of girls being drawn into *kayaye*.

Differences in educational access between fostered and non-fostered children are partly attributable to the characteristics of sending and receiving household and to decisions made by and between these households, as considered below. In addition, differences in the purely descriptive statistics, for example on attainment in English, are partly accounted for by differences in foster and non-foster children's contextual characteristics, at the school and community levels. Because fosterage is a part of traditional Dagbon culture and is associated therefore with adherence to other aspects of that culture, there is significant overlapping of cultural, locational, educational and other factors which calls for caution in the interpretation of associations between fosterage and educational disadvantage and particularly of causal relationships. Fosterage is more common in rural areas, where Dagomba traditional culture may be stronger, affecting gender roles and the importance of traditional marriage preparations, for example. These areas were not, however, found to be prohibitively far from basic schools in the ComSS sample.

Fosterage is especially common among primary when compared to secondary school pupils in Savelugu-Nanton, partly because of higher drop-out and lower transition among fostered children (especially girls) subsequently, but also because recent policies (especially cost-reduction through FCUBE and the Capitation Grant) have increased the supply of and the demand for basic education in rural areas where fosterage is more common; and also perhaps among groups where demand for education was historically low. The literature from the 1970s and previously describes low participation in and enthusiasm for public education in Dagbon**;** a picture which, however, appears to be changing. Some public English-Arabic schools and rural DA schools in Savelugu-Nanton have seen large growth in enrolments and some of these schools are found currently to have very large class sizes. The literature emphasises the traditional value placed on indigenous and Koranic education among the Dagomba, among whom fosterage is also valued; which may partly explain the high prevalence of fostered children in English-Arabic schools (consistent with Abukari's findings) which provide both secular and Koranic learning, some of which were formed from former private Koranic schools as part of the district's drive to increase enrolment. Moreover, some of these schools are relatively poor performing schools, accounting in part for the lower performance of foster children, while not being directly due to fosterage. By contrast, in the relatively new low-cost secular private school in Savelugu for example, fostered children are very few, indicating differences in the cultural backgrounds of pupils between schools.

In Savelugu township then, the availability of a number of types of schools relatively close together, including English-Arabic, Roman Catholic and private suggests selection effects as a result of school-preference; in a context where parents are relatively free to choose between schools, particularly following recent policies to improve access. The numbers of fostered children in the schools which do not provide Koranic instruction were small where choice was available. In the rural parts of the district surveyed, only DA schools are available and these were found to have high proportions of fostered children. While the viability of Dagomba indigenous education practices are considered to be part of the reason for historically low enrolment in public schools, these were rarely mentioned in interviews, suggesting a decline in their importance which is also consistent with an increased appetite for public schooling; which was expressed in the generally positive attitudes of household caregivers, including towards the education of girls.

The data for both the Northern region and for Savelugu-Nanton indicate that typically foster households are more economically advantaged than non-foster households, with the caveat that they contain larger numbers of children. However in the GLSS data, per capita welfare, taking account of household size was still higher on average in foster households. Thus, the

data rather supports the suggestion that foster children are more often sent from less to more advantaged households, perhaps in part to alleviate poverty in their natal homes; consistent with Akresh's (2007) findings for Burkina Faso. Some support is also given to this finding in the interview data where it was suggested that the economic situation, while not the primary reason for fosterage, could determine the direction of inter-household fosterage relationships. Neither was there evidence of disadvantage in the form of caregiver literacy levels in foster homes, since foster households had higher literacy or household head education levels. Inter-household fostering decisions may, then have the net effect of redistributing children to slightly better-off homes both economically and in terms of education indicators. Hence it does not seem generally plausible to suggest that the prevailing economic situation in foster homes *per se* lies behind the educational disadvantage of foster children. Nonetheless, foster homes, especially in rural Savelugu-Nanton, do experience considerable poverty and consequent difficulties in affording schooling costs for all children, especially given their larger numbers of children when compared to non-foster households. This was emphasised at interview by almost every respondent in the sample of rural foster carers. For children in school, however, per-child spending on education did not vary notably by child fosterage or foster-household status in the ComSS data, although non-fostered children in foster households were found to receive the highest average levels of spending in the GLSS data.

What appears to be key to the determination of foster children's educational outcomes within households is intra-household decision making and resource allocation in the context of very tight budgetary constraints. It may be argued that in these circumstances even small differences in preferences for education among carers for biological and fostered children and between the statuses of these types of children within the family and household may therefore be expected to have important effects. Foster children were not found in general to benefit in educational terms from the relative economic advantages associated with foster homes. Non-fostered children in these homes, however, typically did benefit. Indeed, these children were found to be advantaged in terms of school enrolment in the region and in terms of drop-out in Savelugu-Nanton, where they also attained achievement scores more similar to those in non-foster households than to fostered children. These findings contrast with the negative effects of living in foster-homes on non-fostered children found in Cameroon by Marazyan. Intra-household decision-making appears then to offset the economic advantage of living in a foster home where foster children are concerned. This household 'Cinderella effect' is an important reason for poorer educational access for fostered children which may be exacerbated by larger household size; but is arguably a predominantly cultural phenomenon.

Responsibility for foster children's education typically falls primarily to the foster-parent, as argued in the literature and indicated in interviewees' responses. Several reasons have been considered why foster parents may attach a relatively lower priority to foster children's education, including expectations of work; with apparent effects on their pre-schooling, age-grade slippage for boys, drop-out for girls and attainment in English. Becker's argument that a weaker biological connection may also motivate lower prioritisation may also be part of the explanation, and this is consistent with the finding that some foster children experience inferior treatment in the foster home. It may also be exacerbated by the apparent obligatory nature of the foster relationship, in accordance with kinship rites. This was illustrated by the reports of some biological parents that they wished for their children to be enrolled although they were not owing to the foster parent's inability or unwillingness or unable to enrol them; supporting the suggestion that kinship obligations towards fostering were primary, despite the effects on schooling. Further, it is customary that girls are fostered by women, with possible negative consequences for their schooling, since male household heads may not consider it a

priority to bear the costs of educating girls for whom they do not consider themselves directly responsible, especially in circumstances of relative poverty.

The decision to send a child to school was found to be influenced significantly by cost and affordability concerns in both survey and interview data. Despite the apparently lower priority accorded to foster children's education, the effects on educational outcomes may in some case be alleviated through the receipt of assistance, be it financial or otherwise from biological parents, depending on their relationships with foster parents, their willingness and their means. Some interviewees stated that they received such help but many did not, consistent with Abukari's (2008) findings. The prevalence of low incomes in is clearly a major reason why some biological parents feel unable to assist. A further potential reason for poorer school performance by fostered children who are in-school, and whose attendance does not differ notably from non-fostered children, may be found in the possible effects on their self-esteem resulting from the foster relationship in cases where fostered children are accorded inferior status or treatment, as indicated in care-giver interviews. Both education professionals and caregivers suggested that issues in the foster relationship may impact negatively on the child in terms of self-perception; and while this was not investigated directly, it is plausible that such impact might reduce performance and consequently 'meaningful access' to basic education.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Since it is argued that cultural traditions of kinship dominate in explaining why children are fostered, rather than educational opportunities or the provision of child labour of a kind generally antithetical to schooling, the effects of fosterage and educational outcomes are considered to be ambiguous, contingent and mostly indirect, while being more often negative than positive. The findings of this study concur with Pilon's general contention that "everything depends on the nature of the relationship between the family of origin and the host family" (Pilon, 2003:19), including the circumstances of the two homes, the reason for fostering children between them and the extent to which the two homes cooperate to provide for access to education.

Consequently, in response to the counterfactual question of what might be the effects on educational access of the ending of fosterage practices, a mixed picture emerges. Households which receive no fostered children were typically more economically disadvantaged and might therefore experience difficulty in providing for the educations of children who would otherwise have been fostered. Nonetheless, the 'Cinderella effect' of fosterage is found to be palpable, especially for girls, so that being fostered, even to a more economically advantaged households does not typically benefit the foster child educationally and on balance is associated with a worsening of their educational access.

Fosterage is an important tradition in Dagbon, valuable in terms of its benefits for family bonding and in some cases for alleviating crisis, poverty and poor access to schooling. The increased availability and importance of public schooling has, arguably, emphasised some of the negative effects of fosterage, however, perhaps most significantly because of a potential conflict between the 'reciprocal' nature of the fosterage relationship and the requirements of schooling, especially the costs.

One education professional expressed the point thus, recommending greater co-operation between foster and biological parents:

> For instance now, if you foster a girl to your sister, what you should do is that you should try to provide school uniform, you should also try to help your sister to look after the girl but the men don't do it because they still have the traditional belief that as long as you foster the girl the girl becomes and asset and you don't get an asset and continue to feed it money.

He also expressed the view that a change in attitude towards considering foster-children as 'liabilities' rather than 'assets' would benefit the education of fostered children, in this case girls; by encouraging a greater effort to contribute towards schooling costs by biological parents:

> ... you want your sister to send her to school, she will need a school uniform, she will need other school materials, who is going to provide? ... she will not always have the ability or the time to go and do all the other chores that your sister will have wanted her to do for her so she becomes more or less a liability so if she's a liability then you should contribute so that your sister can look after her in school if you actually want the girl to live with your sister.

Of course, much depends on the means as well as the attitudes of foster and biological parents, but advocacy work around the rights of fostered children both to education and equal treatment, which has been undertaken both by the district and by NGOs may serve to

highlight the issue. Sensitisation promoting the shared responsibility for foster-children and their educational costs which takes account of acute scarcity of resources may raise awareness of ways in which foster children's education may be better supported.

More generally, research intended to further a more nuanced understanding of important economic, social and cultural dimensions of life in Dagbon is essential for a fuller conceptualisation of how challenges of educational access in the area might be addressed; not least for the purposes of understanding the reasons why national policies such as fee-elimination may have differential impacts in an area such as Dagbon, including on fostered children. Arguably, these issues are often not always adequately researched or adequately reflected in education policies, especially in poor rural communities with fragile economies and strong cultural values and traditions.

General cost-reduction measures may nonetheless be considered to benefit disadvantaged children disproportionately, including and perhaps especially foster children, since indirect costs for them continue to present a significant barrier to access. The provision of free school uniforms, for example, has begun implementation in some deprived districts in Ghana and serves to reduce indirect costs. School-feeding and the provision of free school materials also serves this purpose, potentially increasing demand for education in the context of low-incomes but also low demand due to relatively low prioritisation, as in the case of fostered children. In addition, measures to improve timely-enrolment and progression might be expected to benefit foster children disproportionately - in the case of boys by reducing age-grade-slippage and in the case of girls by reducing drop-out due to their approaching marriageable age. Improved pre-school provision, a current priority of the education ministry, has the potential to improve timely enrolment and recent statistics do show greater numbers of pupils in P1 at the expected age. Measures to reduce drop-out among girls specifically may also serve to reduce the differentials in access between fostered and biological children.

The use of more flexible schooling timetables, recognising agricultural seasons and children's work commitments may also benefit foster children whose work may be more onerous and whose education may be a lower priority. Another potentially effective measure is the support of informal schooling alternatives such as the 'School for Life' model whereby school-drop-outs are provided vocationally oriented training which can be combined with work and which has also been associated with re-enrolment in conventional schools. Finally, measures to improve school quality in rural areas and poor performing schools may be expected to benefit fostered children who more often reside in these areas and attend these schools. Most of all perhaps, interventions intended to benefit fostered children should recognise that the disadvantage suffered by fostered children results not from fosterage *per se* but from the forms of multiple and overlapping disadvantage associated with fostering in some, but not all cases.

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Report summary:
Fosterage is an important cultural institution which serves to strengthen kinship solidarity among a range of other functions including meeting needs for child labour. Its effects on education are ambiguous. This study examines fostering as a possible contributor to the low levels of educational access and progress in the district using secondary data and interviews with key informants and foster-carers. The effects of fosterage on schooling depend somewhat on the circumstances of the sending and receiving homes, the reason for fostering children between them and the extent to which the two homes cooperate to provide for access to education. Nonetheless, fostered children do typically experience lower levels of access to meaningful education. This is partly because they tend to live in areas and attend schools where meaningful access is lower, but the individual 'Cinderella effect' of fosterage is found to be palpable, especially for girls, so that being fostered, even to a more economically advantaged households does not typically benefit the foster child educationally and on balance is associated with a worsening of their educational access. Fostered children on average enrol in school less often, drop out more often and achieve less in school, especially when compared to biological children in the same home rather than to children in homes which host no foster children.

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